THE IDEA OF COVENANT
in
EARLY ENGLISH PURITANISM

(1580 - 1643)

by

William Wakefield McKee

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
the Graduate School of Yale University
in Candidacy for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

--

1948

© Copyright by
WILLIAM WAKEFIELD MCKEE
1975

THE IDEA OF COVENANT IN EARLY ENGLISH PURITANISM (c1580-1643)

William Wakefield McKee

Reference to a covenant between God and man is found in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, where God's covenants with the patriarchs and the people of Israel is mentioned. The early reformers wrote of covenant in relation to sacraments, and Reformed Church theologians in 16th century Switzerland, Germany, France, and Holland related the idea more fully to theology. A parallel, though not altogether unrelated, expression developed in the late 16th and early 17th centuries among English Puritans who used the idea to describe the relation in which God stands to man, to outline a theory of salvation, to bind men to ethical living, to interpret the course of history, and to characterize the nature of society. While there is no evidence of an organized "covenant" movement in England, a close fellowship existed among advocates of the idea.

The covenant bound God and man in a mutual agreement. It is God's chosen way of dealing with his children and of reconciling man once again to himself. Actually God has made two covenants with men: a covenant of works, which was broken when Adam, as the representative of all mankind, disobeyed thus alienating all men from God; and a covenant of grace, which God in his mercy first made with Christ, and which through Christ is available to the faithful. This is a covenant of salvation restoring man to God's favor, but it is only effectively made with God's elect. God is obligated to no one and chooses whomsoever he will to covenant with him. The covenant concept raises difficulties when applied to God, so God undertakes to do man's part of the bargain as well as his own. Man must consent and accept the covenant, but his action is dependent upon God's acting first. God and man both have a part in the covenant: God to make good his promises of spiritual and earthly blessings, and man to believe in Christ and be obedient to God's moral law. But sin renders man incapable of covenanting without grace. This is a most comfortable doctrine because it rests altogether upon God's mercy and makes God "sure"; it reveals that God deals with his children reasonably and mercifully, not arbitrarily and impersonally. Men are urged to make certain they are in covenant with God.

The covenant is also applied to most social relationships. These too are God's covenants, since God is a third party in them. Each of the three social orders -- family, church, and commonwealth -- is established by covenant. Marriage is based upon a compact freely entered into by a man and a woman. A church -- whether national as the Presbyterians held or a particular congregation according to Congregationalists and separatists -- demands an affirmation of faith and covenanting with others and with God in a spiritual society. By covenant also people bind themselves together to form a civil society, which suggests a theory of social contract. Furthermore, all voluntary relationships among men (those that are not natural or forced) are defined by covenant: husband and wife, master and servant, pastor and people, ruler and subjects, etc. Here covenant not only stresses mutuality and consent, but implicitly moderates social inequalities.

All of life in both its divine and human elements is characterized by covenant. He who is not in covenant with God must have contracted with the devil. Voluntarism is at the heart of covenant thinking. Man is no mere automaton; he consents to his relations with God and man. Despite sin he is free to covenant. But once a man covenants he is bound to live by the rule implied. Ethical activity for the glory of God is demanded, but significantly covenant law implies government by consent and not by fiat. Only in covenant with God is man saved; only in covenant with men does he fulfill his social responsibilities. The idea of covenant does more than reconcile God and believers; it affirms the freedom and duties of man in all his relationships, both divine and human.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION 1

The Background of the Covenant Idea

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COVENANT IDEA ON THE CONTINENT 6

The Covenant in the Scriptures 6

The Covenant Among the Early Reformers 8

Covenant Theology in Germany 20

The Use of the Covenant in France 26

Later Swiss and Dutch Covenant Writers 29

The Covenant Idea in Early Seventeenth Century Europe 31

Scotch Ideas of Covenant 34

Summary 35

II. THE ENGLISH COVENANT PREACHERS 38

Sixteenth Century Covenant Writers 41

The Early Separatists 50

The Ames Circle 55

The Sibbes Circle 62

Other Seventeenth Century Writers 76

Summary 81

The Covenant Between God and Man

III. THE COVENANT IN THEOLOGY 86

God's Covenant 90

Why the Covenant? 92

What is the Covenant? 94

Kinds of Covenant 96

Characteristics of the Covenant 103

Who is in Covenant? 115

How is the Covenant Entered? 118

What Breaks the Covenant? 129

How Know Whether One is in Covenant? 134

IV. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE THEOLOGICAL COVENANT 142

The Covenant Interpretation of God 146

Man as Viewed in Covenant Theology 155

The Covenant Theory of Salvation 170

The Role of Scriptures 178

Covenant Morality 182

Towards a Philosophy of History 192

The Covenant Between Men

V. THE COVENANT AND THE CHURCH 200
Three Major Puritan Groups 203
The National Church Covenant 207
The Particular Church Covenant 235
Summary 263

VI. THE COVENANT AND CIVIL SOCIETIES 268
The General View of Society 269
The Oeconomicall Society 281
The Political Society 290

CONCLUSION 315

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Primary Sources 325
Secondary Sources 340

INTRODUCTION

An examination of the writings of leading figures of the Reformation reveals frequent references to "the covenant," "God's Covenant," or "the new covenant." This is especially true among churches in the Calvinistic tradition, for it was in Reformed church circles that the idea of covenant developed as a particular interpretation of Christian theology.

But the idea was by no means confined to the European continent. It made an early appearance in Scotland as well as England, and achieved central significance in the early years of the New England colonies. While essentially a religious concept it was not merely a theological term but was used in sixteenth and seventeenth century political thought to describe the basis of society and of human relations. A consideration of the covenant therefore has relevance not only for the history of Christian thought but also for the history of social and political philosophy.

It is proposed in this thesis to inquire into and describe the idea of covenant as set forth among English Puritans from its infrequent use in the Elizabethan period,through its more systematized expression,and down to the time of the English civil war. Over this space of roughly sixty years "covenant" was not only employed to describe the relationship between God and man but also to define most human relationships. The year 1643, when the Solemn League and Covenant was adopted, has been chosen somewhat arbitrarily as the terminal point of this study. This is not to infer that covenant thinking came to an end at this date; indeed much continued to be written about the covenant, and the idea took on new aspects as it was challenged and expounded in the ensuing years. However, the civil war period offers a convenient stopping place marking the close of the early expression of the idea.

The origin of any concept is difficult to trace, and in the case of the covenant there is little clear evidence of the exact sources of such thinking in England. Evidence of the covenant idea earlier on the continent of Europe precludes any suggestion of its originating in England or developing there independently. Undoubtedly English covenant thinking was influenced in some degree by Reformed continental theologians, and certainly it was stimulated in part by Old and New Testament references to covenants. At all events it was no isolated English development. Actually a somewhat contemporaneous interest in the idea is noted in England and parts of the continent. And if the continental reformers influenced men in England, English ideas in turn permeated back into Europe, especially through Holland, and spread across the Atlantic into New World colonies.

Little or no recognition has been given the idea of covenant or the covenant writers in religious and political histories of England in this period. In part this may be because of the minor impact these men made upon contemporary English life and thought. Yet their central contribution appears to have been overlooked. Even most theological historians fail to mention the men much less their ideas. Some attention has been given to the covenant in relation to the theory of church government,[1] but without placing this in the larger framework of religious and social covenant ideas. Interest in the early development of New England has resulted in descriptions of the covenant in New England, although with little reference to the English scene.[1]

---

[1] Burrage, Champlain, The Church-Covenant Idea. Philadelphia, 1904.

As the following pages indicate, there existed in England from the latter part of the sixteenth century on into the seventeenth century a rather intimately related group of men who elaborated a theology centered on the concept of covenant and who were broadly concerned with the implications of the idea for ethical and social living. The church was only one area in which they applied the covenant to the social fabric, though in some ways it proved the most important and far reaching. But the idea grew from casual references to a covenant by some of the early English reformers until by 1630 Puritan preachers could assume an acquaintance with the theory on the part of their readers, and the idea of political covenant had provided a philosophic justification for opposing the king.

With few exceptions the English exponents of covenant thinking were Puritans. The name Puritan, originally employed in ridicule and contempt, is confusing because of its variety of meanings. Here it is used in a broad sense to signify those who took exception to the ritual or government of the established English church and urged its reformation according to the divinely ordained form set forth in the Scriptures. Some felt they could undertake this reform from within, while others found it necessary to separate from the national state church. Various types of non-conformity, Presbyterian, Congregational, Independents, may therefore be included in the term and more precise titles will need to be used to differentiate groups within Puritanism. Puritan may be considered a designation opposed to Episcopalian or Anglican, if by the latter is meant the supporter of the hierarchical

---

1. Miller, Perry, The New England Mind. New York, 1936 . Also "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXVII, 1936.

government and high ritual of the established church, and if it is recognized that many who were classed as Puritans still considered themselves in fellowship with and a part of the church of England.

An inquiry into covenant thinking poses interesting questions as to the general implications and significance of the idea. What makes this covenant idea intriguing is that its influence was felt in so many different areas. In religion it presented a picture of a co-operative relationship between God and man, which served to call attention to the freedom and ability of man. It made man rather than God the starting point in theology. Psychologically it emphasized the importance of the human will and injected the element of voluntarism and consent into all areas of human life. In social philosophy it served to mitigate the injustices in the medieval pattern of social hierarchy. In politics it introduced the notion of "consent of the governed" and moved in the direction of limiting civil authority. Moreover, it offered the basis upon which a theory of social contract could be formulated. Ethically it impressed upon man his duties to God and to his fellow men and advocated the necessity of men proving their faith by their deeds. It represented history as the story through the ages of God's reasonable and predictable and gracious manner toward men in which he promises all his blessings to those who are in covenant with him. It is because in these many facets the idea of covenant not only offers a clue to the mood of the times but also some insight into the background of later religious and political developments that a study of it is so suggestive and rewarding.

Some statement on the order of presentation to be followed may be helpful. While a simple chronological setting forth of the topic would appear logical in an historical survey, a strict adherence to chronology in this study seems inadvisable and impractical since the essential discussion of the covenant within the period chosen follows so closely the same pattern that there is a large area of common interpretation in the various treatises and sermons. It therefore seems preferable to discuss in turn the various areas in which the covenant idea prevailed. The division of the thesis into two major parts, dealing with the covenant in theology and the covenant in society, has some justification in Puritan thinking. The meaning of the covenant in terms of piety and man's relationship to God, as well as in terms of sociology and man's relationship to man, must both be explored to understand the full significance of the early English use of the idea.

The first chapter will sketch in a general fashion some evidences of the existence of the covenant idea on the continent in the sixteenth century. Then coming to England, there follows a biographical chapter on the men who wrote on the covenant. Chapter three seeks to set forth objectively, without much comment, what the idea of "covenant" is and how it was applied to God and man. Next comes an interpretative section on the significance of the concept of covenant for aspects of theology, ethics, and history. The last two chapters are concerned with the social expression of the idea, first, in terms of the church, as developed both by Presbyterians and Independents, and secondly, in terms of the family and civil society.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE COVENANT IDEA

I. The Development of the Covenant Idea on the Continent

II. The English Covenant Preachers

Chapter I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COVENANT IDEA ON THE CONTINENT

To better understand covenant thinking in England it may be helpful to trace hastily the early expressions and extent of covenant thought in countries on the European continent both prior to and contemporary with the writings upon the subject in England. Not only is it interesting to probe into the beginnings of the sixteenth century idea of covenant but also to see at what points there was contact and interchange of ideas between the continent and England. However, before turning to the continental background a still more ancient source of the covenant might be explored by recalling the varied references to the covenant in the Bible.

The Covenant in the Scriptures.

It is fitting to open consideration of the idea of covenant with an inquiry into the Scriptures since it was to the Old and New Testaments, and especially the former, that covenant writers referred when elaborating their covenant ideas. Undoubtedly the frequent mention of covenants in the Bible must have given some impetus to the adoption of the idea in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A.B. Davidson reports that in the Old Testament alone the word bĕrîth, usually translated "covenant", occurs "well on to three hundred times."[1]

There were two major kinds of covenants in Scriptures, those between man and man and those between God and man.[2] Chronologically the latter type may be assumed to be secondary and to have been derived from the practice of covenanting among men, but in terms of the history of people of Biblical times the covenant of God was of major significance.

Some examples of covenants among men include that between

---

1. Davidson, A.B., "Covenant", A Dictionary of the Bible, (Hastings, James, ed.) New York, 1893. Vol. I.
2. The following account is based largely upon the above mentioned Davidson article, and the article on "Alliance" in Dictionnaire De La Bible, Paris 1895.

Issac and Abimelech (Genesis xxvi.25) and another between Jacob and Laban (Genesis xxxi.44). The covenants of Israel with the inhabitants of Canaan (Exodus xxiii.32; xxxiv.12,15; Deuteronomy vii.2), David's covenant with Jonathan (I Samuel xviii.3, xx.8) and his covenant with Abner (II Samuel iii.12) offer additional illustrations. In each of these "bonds", as Davidson points out, there was an agreement as to terms, the swearing of an oath by both parties to perform this agreement, and a curse by each party upon himself in case of failure.

There are numerous illustrations of God's covenant with men. Essentially these are similar to the covenants among men, although the introduction of God modifies the idea by having one party impose and the other accept obligations. God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis xv and xvii) and with David (II Samuel xxiii.5) were two important instances in which God made promises and bound men to him. In Deuteronomy there is the covenant at Horeb based upon the Decalogue (Deuteronomy iv.13; iii.2, ix.9) and the covenant in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy xii-xxvi, xxviii.), in both of which the essential idea is that Jehovah will be their God and they shall be his people. There is a strong ethical emphasis upon the people "walking in his ways and keeping his commandments."

In addition, there is the idea of the new covenant in which the relation to God is renewed. The exile marked the dissolution of the old covenant and the restoration will be the establishment of a new covenant to be written in the heart. (Jeremiah xxxi.31; Ezekiel xxxvi:25ff.) This is the spiritual covenant based on faith, which Hebrews (viii.6-10) refers to as mediated by Christ and which was made available to all nations. Paul makes some mention of the covenant, (cf. Galatians iii.15) affirming there is but one covenant, Abraham's, which is indeed a spiritual bond with God. The New Testament, however, as a whole makes very little reference to the covenant idea.

The Covenant Among the Early Reformers

It was not, however, until the period of the Reformation that the explicit use of the covenant in Christian treatises is apparent. Theological writings of the middle ages do not seem to refer to the idea and Thomas Aquinas in his detailed consideration of Christian doctrine does not use the term or any synonym. In the Reformation period the new importance attached to the Scriptures and to the direct personal relationship of the believer to God were factors particularly conducive to the development of covenant thinking. The word "covenant" is found in the writings of most of the early Protestant reformers, but though the word may have been familar to Lutherans, it is in Calvinistic circles that the concept took hold and matured until it became for some writers the very heart of Christian theology.

? check -

Martin Luther (1483-1546) refers to a covenant in connection with baptism, but beyond this he does not seem to have employed the term. In his Treatise of Baptism he describes the sacrament of baptism as "a gracious covenant of comfort," a pledge in which God gives his grace and promises not to count man's sin against him, and man promises "more and more to slay sin" as long as he lives. Without this covenant man stands condemned, and therefore "there is on earth no greater comfort than baptism."[1] The minor role of covenant in German Lutheranism is further evident from the fact that no mention of it is found in the

---

1. Luther, Martin, Works (Holman ed.) I. pp.61-62.

Augsburg Confession (1530), the Smalcald Articles (1537), the Formula Concord (1577), or other Lutheran creeds.[1]

It is also in connection with baptism that Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531) speaks of the covenant. But in order to present a case for infant baptism against the "Catabaptists" he traces the history of the covenant and describes various examples of God's covenant with men. To prove that "the children of Christians are no less sons of God than the parents," Zwingli turns to the Old Testament and recalls God's covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, the Israelites, leading finally to Christ.[2] He affirms there is only one covenant, and that the covenant God made with Noah, Abraham and other faithful is the very same covenant he makes in the New Testament period. Zwingli refutes the Gnostic view that there are two testaments, two covenants, two churches, and virtually two gods. Assigning equal importance to the Old Testament and the New,[3] he asserts that God shows the same mercy and justice in the period before Christ's coming as he does afterwards.[4] "God is as much our God as he was Abraham's and we are as much his people as was Israel."[5]

The covenant is the same even though it may be characterized by different "signs" or acts in which people join to mark their entrance into the covenant. Thus God replaced circumcision with baptism as the sign and seal of his covenant, but the essential meaning of the covenant has not been altered. Therefore, concludes Zwingli, just as the Hebrew children under the covenant with their parents merited the sign of the covenant (circumcision), so Christian infants ought not to be deprived of baptism, the sign of the covenant now. Here Zwingli presented the basic argument used later on by those English Puritans interested in proving the efficacy of infant baptism.

---

[1] Cf. comment by Fisher, G.B., Discussions in History and Theology, p.375. Also Schaff, Philip, The Creeds of Christendom (New York,1878) I, pp. 340-353; III, pp.3ff & 93ff.

[2] Zwingli, H. Selected Works (Philadelphia,1901) pp.219-237.

[3] ibid., p.152

[4] ibid., p.229

[5] ibid., p.235

According to Zwingli this one covenant has existed from all time. It was "already conceived before man was formed,"[1] and is based upon God's election. It is established for man's salvation, that man may have "eternal peace and joy." Christ is the mediator, for through him along does sinful man have access to the Father. Even Abraham came to God in no other way "than by him who was promised," and men now enter into covenant with God only through Christ.

While Zwingli does not describe the ramifications of covenant relationships nor discuss the idea in detail, he does point to the continuity of a covenant relation between God and his chosen people throughout history. It is only by covenant with God that men become the people of God. Zwingli contributed to the development of covenant thinking both in his tracing the idea in history and in his correlation of the Old and New Testaments as revealing one covenant.

Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), who was much influenced by Zwingli, succeeded him as preacher in the Zurich cathedral. He likewise was concerned to make clear that "the testament of the old and new church is all one, and that there is but one way of true salvation to all that either are, or have been, saved in this world."[2] For Bullinger the New Testament does not replace the Old Testament, but rather clarifies and confirms it.[3] Therefore, there is only one faith, one savior, one pro-

---

1.Zwingli, op. cit., p.234.
2.Bullinger,H., Decades (Parker Society) (Cambridge,1849-51) III. p.283.
3.Bullinger,H., The Old Faith (Coverdale, Myles, trans.) in Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale (Parker Society) p.11.

mise. There is also only one covenant, which though it be repeatedly renewed, contains each time the promise of Christ, the promise of life.[1]

Like Zwingli, Bullinger refers to God having firstmade this covenant with Adam, and renewed it with Noah, with Abraham, and still later with Moses. When Christ came in the flesh, he "did most absolutely fulfill and finish the old league," and brought "all the principles of our salvation and true godliness into a brief summary, which...he called the new league."[2] But it is essentially the same covenant, for "in the substantial and chiefest points ye can find nothing altered or changed."[3]

The faithful fathers of the Old Testament and "we, the believers of the new covenant," affirms Bullinger, are one people governed by the same spirit. The old and the new covenant are the same"in substance" and differ only "in the manner of administration, in a few accidents, and certain circumstances."[4] The new covenant is more clear; the people of God are now no longer bounded geographically, and the gifts are now "more ample and manifold."

In the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) Bullinger elaborates further on the contrast of the "new covenant" with the old. While continuing to emphasize that "one and the same God is the author of them both," he distinguishes the signs and seals of the "old Church", circumcision and the paschal lamb, from baptism and the Lord's Supper in the "new Church." It is by baptism that one enters the covenant and joins the family of God.

"God who is rich in mercy...by a holy covenant does join

---

1. Bullinger, The Old Faith, p.32ff.
2. Bullinger, Decades, II. pp.169-170.
3. ibid., II. p.170.
4. ibid., II. p.293

> us to himself, and does enrich us with divers gifts, that we might have a new life. All these things are sealed up unto us in baptism."[1]

The interpretation of the covenant in this Second Helvetic Confession is especially noteworthy in view of its wide acceptance not only by Reformed churches on the continent but also in England and Scotland.

Thus far Bullinger's writings on the covenant closely follow the presentation of Zwingli both in showing that the old and new testaments or covenants are essentially one and in a view of history based upon the renewal and fulfillment of the covenant. However, Bullinger took a further step when he affirmed that "true religion is none other thing than a friendship, a knitting, and an unity (or league) with the true, living, and everlasting God."[2] In the Scriptures, explains Bullinger, this is called "a league or covenant," and elsewhere "marriage or wedlock." The covenant relation is the essence of religion. Only by covenant is a person "enrolled into God's household."[3] This suggests more than a reference to the sacraments as signs of the covenant or to the covenant as set forth in the Scriptures; here Bullinger interprets the covenant as the basis of salvation and the way in which a continuing relationship between God and man is established. He calls attention to the mutuality of the covenant in which God promises "ut Deus noster sit," and men promise to be God's people. The covenant reveals both God's promises and man's duties, both "what we may look for from his hands," and "what we doth owe to God."

In making a covenant Bullinger explains that God "as he doth in all things applieth himself to our capacities and imitateth the order which men use in making confederacies."

---

[1] Schaff,P., op. cit., III. pp.890

[2] Bullinger, Decades, III. p.232.

[3] ibid., IV. pp.358,382,399.

> "Men do by leagues...bind themself to the society and fellowship of one body or people...in which society, to the end they may be the safer and live more quietly from the wrongs and injustices of all other nations, they do mutually hazard both lives and livings, the one in the defence of the other's liberties...therefore, when God's mind was to declare the favor and goodwill that he bare to mankind, and to make us mere partakers wholly of himself and his goodness, by pouring himself out upon us, to our great good and profit, it pleased him to make a league or covenant with mankind."[1]

Thus Bullinger claims that God has simply adopted for his plan of salvation the method which men use to form human societies. Apparently the idea of covenants or leagues among men is familar to his readers. Bullinger's explanation suggests that the amplification and development of the covenant in theology was at least to some degree an outgrowth of a prior acquaintance and experience with covenants among men. In other words, the idea of covenant as the basis of a human society formed for mutual welfare illustrated God's covenant as the basis of a divine and holy society formed to bring men into a new relationship to God for their salvation.

In summary, Bullinger applied the covenant in four ways: it explained the meaning of the sacraments; it explained the relation of the Old and New Testaments; it interpreted the sort of relationship in which God stands to man; it determined the composition of the church.

Bullinger's advocacy of the covenant is important because of his unique and influential position over an extended period as a friend and spiritual advisor to many leaders of the English church. From Myles Coverdale, who translated into English one of Bullinger's treatises, on into Elizabeth's reign until his death Bullinger's influence in England is marked. He became personally acquainted with John Hooper, who as an exile visited him in Zurich (1547-49), and later when the number of English refugees increased upon Mary's accession to the English throne (1554), Bullinger had opportunity to know and to help numerous future Elizabethan bishops. Parkhurst, Jewel, Pilkington, Humphrey, and Cole were among those with whom he carried on a voluminous correspondence long after their return to their homeland. While most of these letters between Bullinger and the English clergy deal with matters of ritual and church discipline, it is natural to suspect that the theological views of this highly regarded reformer were also looked upon with admiration. The fact that Bullinger's sermons, The Decades, first published in 1552, had successive editions of the English translation in 1577, 1584 and 1587 is evidence of his popularity in England. Bullinger is indeed probably one direct thread of influence by which covenant theory passed from the continent into England.

---

[1] Bullinger, op. cit., II. p.169.

But neither should the far reaching influence of John Calvin (1509-1564) be overlooked. Though he wrote no separate treatise on the covenant, numerous passages in the Institutes refer to the idea indicating his acquaintance with the concept and with the Biblical passages supporting it.[1] Calvin argues from Scripture (Genesis vi.18; ix.9; xvii.2) that God speaks of his promises as covenants and that the sacraments which he has instituted are the signs and seals of his covenants.[2] All

---

[1] Only rarely, on the other hand, is the word "covenant" mentioned in the several volumes of Calvin's sermons translated and published in England (Thirteene Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluine, London, 1579, trans. by John Field; Foure Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin, London, 1579, trans. by John Field; Two and Twentie Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin, London, 1580, trans. by T.S.). Likewise in Calvin's Tracts (Edinburgh, 1849, 3 vols.) there is little beyond the recognition of a covenant made with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob and a "more excellent covenant" established in Christ. Christians are urged to "flee to this precious covenant" which reveals God's utter graciousness and which through Christ reconciles man to God. (Cf. Tracts, II. p.115)

[2] Calvin, J., Institutes of the Christian Religion (Edinburgh, 1845), IV.xiv.6.

God's promises are of no value unless "preceded by the free covenant of mercy on which the whole certainty of our salvation depends."[1]

Who is partaker of this covenant? Calvin is certain that the covenant is neither preached "equally to all", nor do all those to whom it is preached receive it.[2] "The unsearchable depth of the divine judgment" is displayed in that God "gives to some what he denies to others." He chooses certain men not because of any merit on their part but simply out of "paternal indulgence."[3] Only the free love of God can explain why he should choose some and not others. Why some men in the Old Testament could err and yet remain within the covenant, while others, like Ishmael and Esau, who were also supposedly heirs to the covenant, broke the covenant by their sins, Calvin only explains by declaring that God is a "free dispenser and disposer" and "the only ground on which he will show mercy to one rather than to another is his sovereign pleasure."[4] When the great body of Israelites violated God's covenant, "he restricted it to a few, that it might not entirely fail."[5] Such is the "just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment" of God. The covenant is rooted altogether in God's grace rather than upon any legalistic or mutual formula involving man's participation or agreement.

Calvin again warns that sometimes "on those with whom God makes the covenant, he does not immediately bestow the Spirit of regeneration by whose power they persevere in the covenant even to the end."[6] Many of the Jews, for instance, though they be heirs of Abraham are actually strangers to the covenant; their election is not ratified by the "internal efficacy of grace" which would uphold them.[7] Thus among those externally invited it is not always possible to conclude that they are truly in covenant with God. Yet it would be "an insult to the covenant," continues Calvin, to conclude from this that "to be a son of Abraham was a vain or useless privilege."[1]

---

[1] Calvin, op. cit., III.xviii.7

[2] ibid., III.xxi.1. Cf. also Bullinger, Decades, III.pp.32-34.

[3] ibid., III.xvii.15

[4] ibid., III.xxi.6

[5] ibid., III.xxi.7

[6] ibid., III.xxi.7

[7] ibid., III.xxii.5

This covenant effectively made with the elect stands fast and can never be broken.[2] God's covenant stands inviolate despite the impiety of men.[3] The patriarchs, for example, who were admitted into the covenant, afterwards committed sin, yet God was ready to forgive these offences of his people.[4] God never takes his loving-kindness altogether from those whom he has chosen.

Yet this certainty of God's mercy must never become an excuse to live as a man pleases or to live without regard for God's law. The person in whom the spirit of God enters must repent and endeavor to live a life conformable to the way of God. Those who do not thus endeavor by that very fact manifest that they are outside the covenant. Calvin considers it the highest form of hypocrisy, not to mention the grossest insult to God, for a wicked man to boast of his covenant while he profanes God's name by his everyday life.[5] For a man to think himself in covenant with God when daily he breaks that covenant is evidence that grace has not been effected in him. Those in covenant must recognize their weakness and their continuous dependence upon God. In fact, says Calvin, "those who by the phantom of perfection make believe that they can render themselves completely free from guilt mutilate the covenant in which we have seen that our salvation is contained."[6]

---

[1] Calvin, op. cit., III.xxi.7
[2] ibid., III.iv.32
[3] ibid., IV.ii.11
[4] ibid., IV.i.24
[5] ibid., III.xx.7
[6] ibid., III.xx.45

Calvin approaches the heart of theology when he discusses the manner in which a person enters into and remains in covenant with God. Since the covenant is absolutely gratuitous and wholly dependent upon God's mercy, no merit or righteousness of man enables him to covenant with God.[1] Calvin offers some consolation, however, by recalling that since God made his covenant with the descendents of Abraham, it is good for those descendents to call the covenant to God's remembrance.[2] A man may pray to God that the covenant be ratified with him, and claim his spiritual descent from those with whom God renewed his covenant for all generations. This in no sense contradicts the assertion that God covenants with whom he will. But God has promised to keep covenant with Abraham's seed, and therefore they who can claim membership in his family can be sure of the covenant.

Despite the continuing evidences of sin and popery Calvin believes God has left signs of his covenant in Gaul, Italy, Germany, Spain and England.[3] The populations of these countries are not completely rejected by God, just as God continued his covenant among some of the Jews despite the perfidy and impiety of many. As circumcision in the time of the Jews was a sign and sacrament of God's covenant which could not be "profaned by their impure hands," so now does baptism "retain its power in spite of human depravity." Vestiges of the true Church exist in various lands though the Church be half in ruins, for the Lord has preserved some remnants of his people.

The essence of this spiritual covenant which God made for the salvation of his Church is briefly contained, according to Calvin, in the fifth and sixth petitions of the Lord's Prayer.[1] The fifth refers to the forgiveness of sins, while the sixth "corresponds..to the writing the law upon our hearts." These are the promises on God's part. Without forgiveness of sins there can be no covenant between God and man.[2] On man's part the covenant stipulates "integrity and holiness of life," therefore those in covenant must keep to their duty, which is obedience to God.[3] The demand of duty does not deny that the covenant is of God's free mercy; nor is the faithfulness of man's obedience to be construed in any sense as a reason for God's choosing him. Rather, as Calvin states, it demonstrates "what kind of servants those are who have sincerely entered into the covenant."[4] God first calls men and purifies them so that they can live in greater conformity to the kingdom of God. No man can obey perfectly; God has chosen to perfect his servants by degrees, and therefore some residue of corruption always resides in all men.[5]

---

[1] Calvin, op. cit., III.xiv.6; xvii.15; xvii.5
[2] ibid., III.xx.25
[3] ibid., IV.ii.11

Even in such a brief discussion it is evident that Calvin makes wide use of the covenant idea. There is no systematic discussion of the theory, but there is clear indication of a covenant based upon the freeness of God's mercy upon which man's salvation is founded. This covenant is God's way of uniting man to himself; it is one-sided in that it is utterly dependent upon God's goodness and yet demands obedience to God. Calvin, like Zwingli and Bullinger, mentions the one covenant which has had at various times different signs and seals, but he does not develop the historical evidences of the covenant. His references to Old Testament covenants are scattered, offering no picture of a developing trend in God's revelation.

---

[1] Calvin, op. cit., III.xx.45,46.
[2] ibid., IV.i.20.
[3] ibid., III.xvii.5
[4] ibid., III.xvii.6
[5] ibid., III.xx.45

Calvin's theology provided a framework within which an explicit theory of covenant could develop, but for Calvin the covenant was in no sense central. It served to illustrate and support the general principles of his theology rather than being the determining idea within it. Fundamentally the covenant idea must have raised certain difficulties for Calvin. He was interested in maintaining the personal relationship of the faithful to God, but at the same time he asserted with undiminished vigor the absolute sovereignty of God. The fact that the idea of covenant suggested an interaction between God and man, a two-way relationship, ran counter to Calvin's basic understanding of God's sovereignty. In face of such a dichotomy Calvin could not accept the covenant idea wholeheartedly.

Brief mention should be made of Theodore Beza (1519-1605) as another who frequently mentions "couenant." However, Beza does not seem to have elaborated the idea in his writings. His A Booke of Christian Questions and Answers[1] infers the existence of "the couenaunte of the Lawe," which promised life to him who kept the commandments and which only Christ fulfilled. As for us, says Beza, "wee haue it giuen us by meere grace, from out of him [Christ] ." "Our coniunctione with Christe" is of covenant and is a spiritual union which resembles "bodilye wedlocke" between husband and wife. It is a covenant rather than a natural relation and forms the "undoubted ground of our salvation."[2] It is possible to all who "take holde" of Christ by faith.

Not only was the idea of a covenant relating God and man familar among these Swiss reformers but it also found its way into some of the creedal statements of the sixteenth century. The Belgic Confession (1561), The Gallican (1559) and The Second Helvetic Confession (1566) — all within the Reformed church circles — refer to the covenant in terms of sacraments but they do not develop the idea beyond this.

---

[1] Translated by Arthur Golding. London,1586. (No pagination.)

[2] A letter to Grindal quoted in Frere,W.H. & Douglas,C.E. (eds.) Puritan Manifestoes, (London,1907) p.53.

Covenant Theology in Germany.

The most elaborate covenant writing before the end of the sixteenth century was done by two men at the University at Heidelberg, Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583) and Kaspar Olevianus (1536-1587). These two noted Reformed theologians, joined by less well known colleagues, G. Sohnius and P. Boquinus, gave Heidelberg a reputation as a center of covenant thought. Ursinus helped write the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and then published a large volume, Expositio Catechism Heidelberg,[1] in which he interpreted the doctrines he had presented in the catechism. The Catechism only makes reference to God's covenant as the true way of salvation and as offering a firm consolation of God's favor, while the Expositio devotes a full section to the "Covenant of God."

For Ursinus the covenant is the means whereby two opposing parties, God and man, are reconciled, with Christ as the mediator who makes the covenant possible.

> "A covenant in general is a mutual contract, or agreement between two parties, in which one party binds itself to the other to accomplish something upon certain conditions, giving or receiving something which is accomplished with certain outward signs and symbols, for the purpose of ratifying in the most solemn manner the contract entered into, and for the sake of confirming it, that the engagement may be kept inviolate.."[2]

From this general definition

> "it is easy to perceive what we are to understand by the

---

[1] English translation by G.W.Williard, The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism. (Columbus,1852).

[2] ibid., p.96.

> Covenant here spoken of, which we may define as a mutual promise and agreement, between God and man, in which God gives assurance to men that he will be merciful to them, remit their sins, grant unto them a new righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life by and for the sake of his Son, our Mediator. And, on the other side, men bind themselves to God in this covenant that they will exercise repentance and faith, or that they will receive with a true faith this great benefit which God offers, and render such obedience as will be acceptable to him."[1]

This is mutual covenanting with God promising certain blessings in return for men's repentance and obedience. The terms "Covenant" and "Testament," says Ursinus, "are used in the same sense...for both of them refer to and express our reconciliation with God, or the mutual agreement between God and men."

This covenant, he contends, could only be made by a mediator since man, as one of the parties, is not able in and of himself to do anything which would restore him to the favor of God. Hence, there is no way to God "unless by the intercession of Christ, the Mediator." Only by the satisfaction and death of Christ could a way be opened again between God and man.

Is there more than one covenant? It is "one in substance, but two-fold in circumstances." It is one in substance because there is only "one God, one Mediator between God and Man, Jesus Christ, one way of reconciliation, one faith, and one way of salvation for all who are and have been saved from the beginning."[2] Men are saved now in the same way the "ancient fathers" were saved; "the principal conditions... are the same before and since the incarnation of Christ." In this the similarity with Zwingli and Bullinger is apparent. In all ages the way of salvation has been the same and has required repentance and faith.

Yet there are two covenants, "the old and the new, as it respects the circumstances and conditions...which constitute the form or the mode of administration." In elaborating upon this Ursinus enters into a more detailed discussion of the ways in which these two covenants may be said to agree and to differ. In brief, they agree, 1) in having God as their author and Christ as their Mediator; 2) in the promise of grace; 3) in the conditions of faith and obedience required of men. "The new covenant...agrees with the old in that which relates to the principal conditions, both on the part of God, and on the part of man."[1] In this interpretation Ursinus is only describing in more detail the differentiation suggested by Zwingli and Bullinger.

---

[1] Ursinus, op. cit., p.96
[2] ibid., p.98

The old and new covenants may be said to differ in 1) the promises of temporal blessing (it being special in the old covenant, such as the promise of the land of Canaan, the form of ceremonial worship, the Mosaic polity, etc., but the new only has a general promise that God will preserve his church); 2) the circumstances of the promise of grace (in the old the faithful were received into favor with God on the basis of a Messiah to come, while in the new the blessing was obtained for the sake of a Messiah already come); 3) the rites or signs (circumcision, the passover and sacrifices in the old covenant, while simply baptism and the Lord's Supper in the new); 4) in clearness (the old shadowed good things to come and therefore was "more obscure and unintelligible," while in the new there is a fulfillment of these types "so that everything is clearer and better understood."); 5) the gifts they confer (the effusion of the Holy Spirit "small and limited" in the old, but "large and full" in the new); 6) in duration (the old only lasted until the Messiah came; the new "will continue forever."); 7) their obligation (the old bound to the complete law, moral, ceremonial and judicial, while the new binds only to the moral law); 8) their extent (the old was limited to the Jewish nation, but in the new "the church is established among all nations and is open to all that believe of every nation, rank, condition, or language.")[1]

---

[1] Ursinus, op. cit., pp.98-99.

The old testament or covenant, continues Ursinus, is often referred to in the Scriptures as the law, while the new testament or covenant is "for the most part taken for the gospel." "In the old covenant the law was enforced more strenuously" and "the gospel was also more obscure"; in the new covenant the opposite is true for "a great part of the law is abrogated, and the gospel is here more clearly revealed." So the distinction between law and gospel is only a relative one, and Ursinus is careful not to identify completely the law and the gospel with the old and new testaments or covenants respectively.

Question 19 in the Catechism asks "whence knowest thou this?" and Ursinus answers

> "From the Holy Gospel, which God himself revealed first in Paradise, and afterwards published by the Patriarchs and Prophets, and was pleased to represent it by the shadows of sacrifices, and the other ceremonies of the law; and lastly has accomplished it by his only begotten Son."[2]

In other words, here is a great drama in which God as the chief actor, if not the sole active actor, is unfolding progressively through the ages his will and his way to men. The scheme of the covenant is simply the medium by which God reveals and relates himself to man.

The familar idea of the sacraments as the signs of the covenant is again repeated by Ursinus. "Baptism is the sign of the covenant between God and the faithfull; the Lord's Supper is the sign of the preservation of the same covenant."[3] Both are signs of adoption into the family of God, and replace circumcision and the passover which were the seals of the early covenant.

---

[1] Ursinus, op. cit., pp.99-100.
[2] ibid., p.100.
[3] ibid., p.380.

> "Baptism is the testimony of our regeneration of the covenant made with God, and of our reception into the church; the Lord's Supper testifies that we are to be perpetually nourished by Christ dwelling in us, and that the covenant once entered into between God and us shall ever be ratified in regard to us, so that we shall forever remain united with the church and body of Christ."[1]

There can be no new covenant asserts Ursinus, not even for those who fall into sin after once having received the covenant. But there may be "a renewal of the first covenant."[2] Men are warned not to profane this gracious covenant of God. This is possible to do "by administering the signs of the covenant to those to whom God promises nothing" or it may be done "by using the signs without repentance and faith." "Those...who give the signs of the covenant to the ungodly, make God the friend of the wicked, and make the children of the devil the children of God."[3] Ursinus, however, offers no special instruction as to how one can be certain that the signs of the covenant will not be shared with those "to whom God promises nothing." He neglects to state clearly how one is to know to whom the promises of God are actually given.

In summary, the covenant for Ursinus is a mutual agreement involving man's true salvation based upon God's promises. God sets the terms, and while certain conditions are required of man under the gospel no less than under the law,[4] man is in no position to fulfill these conditions without the prior help of God. Ursinus regards it as highly significant that God out of his goodness is willing to enter into relationship with man by way of a covenant. He really believes in only one covenant, which has existed from all time, though differing before Christ's coming and afterwards in its mode of administration. In his careful elaboration Ursinus presented a more detailed and explicit view of the covenant than any writer considered thus far.

---

[1] Ursinus, op. cit., p.434.
[2] ibid., p.381.
[3] ibid., p.430.
[4] ibid., p.490.

Kaspar Olevianus (1536-1587), Ursinus' contemporary and colleague at Heidelberg, briefly mentions a covenant between God and his elect in his Exposito symboli Apostolici (1576), but develops the idea more carefully in two later works, De substantia foederis gratuito inter Deus et electos (Genf,1585) and Gnadenbund Gottes (Herborn, 1590). The first of these two was the earliest volume encountered which used the word "covenant" in its title.

Olevianus describes a covenant between God and his chosen faithful, and also a covenant between God and Christ, in which the Son enters into agreement with the Father to sacrifice himself in order to make possible the salvation of those whom the Father has chosen.[1] Thus, according to Olevianus, not only does God deal with men by way of covenant, but he works with his Son by covenant. The covenant idea here enters one step deeper into theology and penetrates the Trinity by describing the relationship of Father and Son as related to the work of salvation in covenant terms.

Furthermore, Olevianus mentions the existence not only of the foedus gratiae but a foedus legale.[2] This second covenant is not defined, but its title would seem to indicate a completely different covenant. However, Olevianus' foedus legale refers to the covenant of law with Moses, and therefore must not be confused with a covenant with Adam made before the fall and which, as will be seen later on, was also

---

1. Heppe, H., Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der reformirten Kirche. (Leiden, 1879) p.211.
2. ibid., p.211note

called a legal covenant. Actually Olevianus' two covenants are again really one covenant, and therefore correspond to the distinction between the old and new covenants, paralleling the Old and New Testaments, as found in Bullinger, Ursinus, and others. Olevianus only presented one covenant.

The Use of the Covenant in France.

Another strain of covenant thinking in the sixteenth century appeared in France sometime around 1574-76 with the publication of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*. In contrast to the sermons and theological works previously mentioned, the *Vindiciae* is essentially a political manifesto. Just as truly an outgrowth of the Reformed church as the Heidelberg Catechism, the *Vindiciae* was also a setting forth of a political creed growing out of the tragedy and persecution of the Huguenots.

The *Vindiciae*, a quest for a philosophical foundation for political authority, presents the covenant as the basis of political order and power. It distinguishes between two covenants: one between God and the people, including the king, "that the people might be the people of God," and a second "between the king and the people that the people shall obey faithfully and the king command justly."

The first covenant is founded upon the story of King Josiah (II Chronicles xxiii) when all the people and the king covenanted "that God should be their Lord," thus obligating themselves "by solemn oath to serve God before all things."[1] The significant point is that the king joins the people in making this covenant with God; "the king is as well bound to observe the law as you."[2] A king, by virtue of being a king, is not absolved from this covenant, but both king and people are responsible to see that the law of God is followed.[1]

---

[1] *A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants. A translation of the Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos.* (New York,1923) p.72.

[2] *ibid.*, p.73

Upon this first covenant the Vindiciae bases its argument that "if God commands one thing and the king commands the contrary what is that proud man that would term him a rebel who refuses to obey the king, when else he must disobey God?"[2] It is only a single step then to the conclusion that it is lawful to resist particular princes who disregard the law of God. The very fact that God covenants with the people is a recognition of a certain authority of the people, for "in the business of making a covenant with the people God would openly and plainly show that the people have right to make, hold, and accomplish their promises and contracts."[3] The people are not simply under bondage and service to a king, but they are under covenant with God.

Now secondly there is a covenant between the people and the king.[4] The prince is established by all the people, which means, says the author, "that the kings should acknowledge that after God they hold their power and sovereignty from the people."[5] It is the people who make the king and not the king the people. While in accordance with the hierarchical conception of society the king is superior to individual persons in the kingdom, yet "the whole body of the people and officers of the state, who represent that body, are the princes' superiors."[1] In the covenant with the king

---

[1] op. cit., p.89

[2] ibid., pp.79-80.

[3] In speaking of the people, the author of the Vindiciae, following Calvin, means not "all the people one by one" but "the princes, the officers of the crown, the peers, the greatest and most notable lords, the deputies of provinces..or the parliament or the diet or other assembly." (p.99) Private persons have "no power..no public command, nor any calling to unsheathe the sword of authority." (p.104) The Vindiciae offers no justification for resistance to authority on the part of ordinary citizens.

[4] ibid., pp.71,175.

[5] ibid., p.118

> "The people by way of stipulation, require a performance of covenants, the king promises it. Now the condition of a stipulator is in terms of law more worthy than of a promiser. The people ask the king whether he will govern justly and according to the laws? He promises he will. Then the people answer, and not before, that whilst he governs uprightly, they will obey faithfully. The king therefore promises simply and absolutely, the people upon condition — the which failing to be accomplished, the people rest according to equity and reason, quit from the promise."[2]

No kingdom or state worthy of the name, asserts the Vindiciae, exists where "there is not some such covenant or confederacy between the people and the prince."[3] There is a mutual obligation which for the ruler to violate is to become a tyrant and for a people to purposely break "may be justly termed seditious."[4] But the obedience of the people rests conditionally upon the just ruling of the king.

While individual citizens cannot rise against a tyrant, it is not only lawful but their duty for "the officers of a kingdom to suppress a tyrant."[5] In turn, these officers "may be truly ranked in the number of tyrants, if they do not contain the princes within the limits of reason."[6] In such instances the only retort of the private man is to "bear with bad princes and pray for better."[7]

While both the king and the people are thus bound by two covenants, most stress in the Vindiciae is laid upon the double obligation and covenant of the king.

> "In the first covenant or contract there is only an obligation to piety; in the second, to justice. In that the king promises to serve God religiously; in this to rule the people justly. By the one he is obliged with the utmost of his endeavours to procure the glory of God;

---

[1] op. cit., p.212
[2] ibid., p.175
[3] ibid., p.177.
[4] ibid., p.181.
[5] ibid., p.199.
[6] ibid., p.201.
[7] ibid., p.210.

> by the other, the profit of the people. In the first, there is a condition expressed, 'if thou keep my commandments'; in the second, 'if thou distribute justice equally to every man.' God is the proper revenger of deficiency in the former, and the whole people the lawful punisher of delinquency in the latter, or the estates, the representative body thereof, who have assumed to themselves the protection of the people."[1]

It is little wonder that the *Vindiciae* was translated into English and published in 1622 and reprinted again in 1631, or that Harold Laski asserts "the destruction of the Stuarts was not unconnected with the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*."[2] In its general approach the *Vindiciae* patently continues the discussion in the fourth book of Calvin's *Institutes*, but it was unique in setting forth the conditions of political authority so clearly in terms of covenant.[3]

Later Swiss and Dutch Covenant Writers.[4]

Several later Swiss writers illustrate the continued development of the covenant idea. Stephen Kis Szegedin (1515-1572) in his *Theologicae sincerae loci communes* (Basel, 1585) differentiated between the *foedus generale* and the *foedus speciale*. This may well mark the earliest acceptance of two separate covenants. The general covenant God made with his whole creation in the person of Adam. The special covenant, instituted before the beginning of the world, God enters into with his elect. The substance of this latter covenant is the same for all ages, and it forms the sole basis and hope of man's salvation. Historically Szegedin distinguishes three periods of the covenant with the elect, each of which has its "singularis religionis dispensatio": before the law, under the law, and after the law. Here again the covenant is used to present an historical view of salvation.

---

[1] *op. cit.*, pp.175-6

[2] *ibid.*, p.60. (Introduction)

[3] John Ponet's unusual work, "A Short treatise of politike power and of the true obedience which Subjects owe to kings and other civill governours," first printed in 1556, like the *Vindiciae*, discusses the limits of political authority but without covenant terminology. In comparison to Ponet, the *Vindiciae* is basically a religious treatise.

[4] The very sketchy outline of persons and titles mentioned in this and the following section is based primarily upon Heppe,H.L.J., *Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der reformirten Kirche* (Leyden,1879) and articles on individual theologians ~~and~~ on "Covenant" in *Realencyklopadie fur protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Leipzig,1896) and *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York,1908)

Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), professor of theology at Bern, in his chief work, Loci Communes theologiciae sacrae (Bern,1554;English translation by J. Man, London,1563) presents much the same view as Szegedin. He too separates the foedus terrenum from the foedus speciale ac sempiternum. In the early seventeenth century two other Swiss writers carried this differentiation between covenants a step further. Amandus Polanus in his Syntagam theologicae christianae (1609) not only refers to an original covenant which is made with all creatures but distinguishes between the foedus operum and foedus gratiae. Then in 1626 Johannes Wolleb (1586-1629) in his Compendium theologicae christianie identifies three covenants: one made with all creatures at the creation; one made with our first parents, a foedus operum; and finally a third made after the fall in order to save mankind from misery and sin, a foedus gratiae. Wolleb's popularity in England is attested by the frequency with which Puritan writers mentioned him and his Compendium.

By the close of the sixteenth century the covenant idea was also evident in the Netherlands. Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) studied at Neustadt under Ursinus and also at Heidelberg, thus directly linking the German and the Dutch. Moreover, he came to England and was awarded a B.A. at Cambridge (Magdalene) in 1582. For seventeen years, until 1611, Gomarus held a professorship at the University of Leyden, resigning to become pastor of a reformed congregation in Middelburg. Undoubtedly he must have become acquainted with the English theologian, William Ames, who came to Leyden in 1611 and was offered the theological chair in a theological school there.

Gomarus in his inaugural lecture at the University of Leyden entitled De foedere Dei (1594) refers to two covenants. The first God established in Paradise as "mutua obligatio Dei et hominium do vita aeterna ipsis certa conditione denda." The condition of this covenant was complete obedience to God, which fallen man could not perform. So immediately after the fall God added to his "foedus naturalle" a "foedus supernaturale et novum" which is "mere gratuitam." In this second covenant God demands from man nothing but faith, which he himself works in them by his Spirit.

The Covenant Idea in Early Seventeenth Century Europe

In Germany by the turn of the century Marburg and Bremen seem to have supplanted Heidelberg as the center of covenant writing. Raphael Eglin (1559-1622), successively professor at Zurich and Marburg (1606--), presented a rather full description of the covenant of grace in his Diexodus theologica (1609) and De foedere gratiae (Marburg, 1613). At Bremen two men, Urban Pierus (? -1616) in his LXXII Aphorismi de foedere Dei cum homibus, and Matthias Martinus (1592-1630) in his Christianae doctrinae summa capita (1603), and more especially in his De foederis naturae et gratiae signaculis (1618), continued to apply the idea of covenant to theological doctrine, with Martinus at least mentioning both covenants of works and of grace.

Meanwhile additional covenant writing appeared in the Netherlands. Both Lucas Trelcatius the elder, who died at Leyden in 1602, and his son, Lucas Trelcatius (1570-1607) incorporated the covenant in their works. In 1611 appeared the first covenant writing from Franeker in Henricus Antionides Nerdenus' Systema theologicum. Herman Ravensperger at Groningen in his Wegweiser (1615) distinguished carefully between a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. Since he had studied at Heidelberg and Marburg, it is reasonable to suppose that he was indebted to some of the German Reformed theologians who advanced covenant ideas. Johann Cloppenburg (1592-1658), who taught at Franeker from 1644-1653, published an explicit work on the covenant in 1645, XI Disputationes de foedere Dei et Testameno veteri et novo, in which he distinguished the covenant of works made with Adam and broken by Adam's sin from the new covenant sponsored by Christ. In 1648 appeared the major work of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), who had studied at Bremen under Martinus and Ludwig Crocius and at Franeker (1629) under the Englishman, William Ames. Cocceius joined the faculty at Franeker in 1636 as professor of Hebrew and in 1643 became professor of theology. Cocceius in his Summa doctrina de foedere et Testamento dei presented a most systematic exposition of covenant theology based upon the antithesis of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace and deducing all Christian doctrine from these two covenants.

G.P. Fisher thinks Cocceius was the first to engraft "the conception of a covenant with Adam, as the representative of the race, upon Calvinistic theology."[1] However, this conclusion would need to be revised not only in light of such an original covenant made with Adam prior to the fall mentioned by Szegedin (1585), Musculus (1599), Polanus (1609), Eglin (1609), Wolleb (1626) and Cloppenburg (1645), but also by at least William Perkins and William Ames in England.[2] Cocceius' covenant thinking must be considered in the context of what had gone before.

---

1. Fisher, G.P., op. cit., p.375.
2. Cf. Perkins, Works (1608-31), III. p.415; and Ames, Marrow of Sacred Divinity (1643), pp.47-8.

Switzerland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, as well as England and Scotland, offer evidence of considerable attention to the idea of a covenant between God and man long before Cocceius' particular interpretation of the covenant became the basis of a special school of theology.

The Netherlands should not be left without brief mention of James Arminius (1560-1609). Arminius who had lived in Geneva and been much influenced by Beza, was invited by Martin Lydius of Franeker (1589) to refute the infralapsarian views of certain Dutch ministers. At the time Arminius was pastor of a Reformed congregation at Amsterdam, and the invitation from Lydius led him to reconsider his own views, with the result that he found he could no longer agree with Beza. He thereupon affirmed a conditional predestination and infralapsarianism. Though he had disputed with Francis Junius on the subject of predestination, he succeeded the latter in the chair of theology at Leyden in 1603.

The relationship of God and man was a central concern of Arminius. Coming out of a Calvinistic tradition, he must have been acquainted with the covenant idea, although it never assumed great importance in his own writings. He does mention God's "two-fold covenant," the legal and evangelical, one of works and justice and the other of faith and mercy.[1] Scripture, he says, reveals no other way of salvation than these two. Happiness is obtained in the first "by perfect obedience to the law," and in the second by "remission of disobedience and the imputation of righteousness." The first covenant was used in reference to the angels and to Adam "created in a state of supernatural grace;"[2] the second was prepared only for man considered as a sinner. Arminius refutes William Perkins' view that God had predestined some from all time and believes that both creation and the fall preceeded the decree of predestination.[1] This assertion of infralapsarianism emanated from Arminius' belief that otherwise God is made responsible for evil since he must have willed Adam to sin. Consequently Arminius maintains that the covenant of grace was instituted after the fall. Both here, and later in England, the covenant idea appears equally acceptable whether supralapsarian or infralapsarian views are held, though the latter lends encouragement to two different covenants, one before and one after the fall, whereas the former view of predestination logically speaks of one covenant existing from all time. Moreover, it is worth noting that the idea of covenant could be applied as well to Arminian as Calvinistic theology.

---

[1] Arminius, James, Works, (Nichols Series, 1835) I, p.186.
[2] ibid., I. p.167.

Scotch Ideas of Covenant.

The application of the covenant idea peculiar to Scotland was the covenant between God and the people as a nation. The series of Scotch national covenants are well known beginning in 1557 and renewed as occasion warranted.[2] The National Covenant of 1580 and its reaffirmation in 1638 marked the two most important of these expressions of national unity. These Bands were entered into by men before God to promote true religion as set forth in the Scriptures. They were anti-papal at first and later also anti-episcopal. They were usually entered into when anything threatened the life of the nation and the church.

John Knox (c.1505-1572) further advanced the idea of the people being in league with God. He does accept sacraments as

---

[1] Arminius, *op. cit.*, I. pp.298,364.

[2] Cf. Lumsden, John, *The Covenants of Scotland* (Paisley,1914) and Fleming, D.H., *Story of the Scottish Covenants* (1904)

> "instituted of God not only to make a visible difference betwixt his people and those that were without his league, but also to exercise the faith of his children."[1]

But more frequently he refers to the covenant of the people with God, "that he alone shall be our God, and we shall be his people." As early as 1554 he warns "the Faithful in London, Newcastle and Berwick" that the nation cannot escape God's vengeance if it refuses to be in covenant with God.[2] Idolatry can be avoided only when men covenant and "swear solemnly never to have fellowship with any religion except that which God has confirmed by his manifest word."[3] To be in league with God is to be in society with God.

Robert Rollock (1585-1598), the first Principal of the University of Edinburgh, was another prominent sixteenth century Scot interested in the idea of covenant. Rollock's Questiones et Responsiones aliquot de foedere Dei (1596) indicates his thinking of the two theological covenants. The first, the Covenant of Works, was made at man's creation, and Rollock interprets its being repeated often in the Old Testament. The second, the Covenant of Grace, was only partially revealed after the fall but fully revealed with the coming of Christ.[4]

Summary

It is clear that by the early part of the seventeenth century the covenant idea had been applied extensively to theological doctrine, to politics, and to the Church. It can be traced from the early Reformed theologians to its fuller expression in the writings of men in Germany, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Scotland. As the next chapter will show, a parallel development of the covenant idea took place in England. To what extent did the continental interpretations influence English covenant thinking? Some cross-fertilization is evident, but it is difficult to appraise the full extent of it.

---

[1] Knox, John, "The Confession of Faith and Doctrine," Writings of the Rev. John Knox (London,1830), p.254. Cf. also "Scotch Confession of Faith (1560) in Schaff, op. cit., III. p.467.

[2] Knox, op. cit., p.20.

[3] ibid., p.21.

[4] Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, "Robert Rollock," and Lindsay, T.M., "The Covenant Theology" in The British & Foreign Evangelical Review, XXVIII, p.531-2. (1879)

Certainly the numerous references to the writings of early reformers, particularly Calvin and Bullinger, found in English volumes indicate how familar these men's works were in England. The publication in England in the 16th century of the writings of Calvin, Bullinger, Musculus and others, often in translation, is some indication of the interest in their ideas. The number of Protestant exiles from England who sojourned in Germany and Switzerland during the reign of Queen Mary cannot be overlooked as another possible direct link, even though these men's writings offer little evidence of covenant thinking. Similarly Gomarus' period of study at Cambridge and Cartwright's visit to Geneva (1571-2) and Heidelberg (1573) and his ministry in Antwerp and Middelburg (c.1573-85) illustrate the two-way travel between the continent and the island.

However, neither the Heidelberg, Marburg, nor even the Dutch developments of the covenant idea could have has a decisive influence upon England since they were more or less contemporaneous with some covenant writing in England. On the other hand, the migration of so many Puritans to Holland, and most especially the leadership of Ames at Leyden and Franeker, may well point to contributions Englishmen made to covenant theology in the Netherlands. The fact that Ames' most influential and important work, the Medulla Theologica, was published in Leyden so soon after he left England would indicate that the idea of covenant expressed therein was well formulated in his mind before he left England rather than in any real sense being inspired abroad. It was William Perkins to whom Ames more than once affirmed his indebtedness, so that Ames may more truly be regarded a disciple of Perkins rather than to have been molded decisively by continental influences. It is therefore fitting to turn now to an examination of who these covenant preachers and writers in England were.

Chapter II.

THE ENGLISH COVENANT PREACHERS

Although the idea of covenant can readily be traced among a number of English preachers from the latter decades of the sixteenth century on, no distinct covenant group or covenant school of thought developed in England. There is abundant evidence pointing to close personal relationships among Puritan writers on the covenant but no indication of their regarding themselves a formal fellowship of covenant preachers. Nor does one central figure emerge as a "founder" to whom all looked, although general admiration and high praise were expressed for several outstanding men. Therefore, while numerous common ties among these men give the impression of group solidarity and even of ideological succession, there is no common simple framework into which they fit.

For example, many non-conformists to the policies and practices of the established church spoke of the covenant, and it was primarily a Puritan idea. But when this is examined further, it becomes evident that separatists and non-separatists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Independents all wrote of one form or another of the covenant. Not only is there this diversity, but by no means all Puritans can be considered covenant advocates. In fact, many who rebelled against and criticized the English church make no mention of the idea. Or again, in a search for a unifying frame of reference, it is possible to generalize and to conclude that for the most part the theology of covenant writers was in the Calvinistic tradition, and yet in the 1630s and 1640s covenant thinking is traceable among some who were accused of Arminian and Antinomian preferences. Still again, the great majority of these men were educated at Cambridge, which would lead to the conclusion that here is a common root, but now and then a writer with a strong enthusiasm for the covenant idea is discovered to have received his training at Oxford. The picture is indeed mixed, and only makes difficult an organization of the expression of covenant thinking in England. It may well be because of this very diffusion and absence of any formal group that the men under consideration have received little attention in theological and ecclesiastical histories of the period.

And yet in spite of all that has been said a rather amazing and profound spiritual kinship existed among the chief figures who preached in covenant terms. As already mentioned, the idea essentially took root in Puritan circles. With only two noteworthy exceptions, and both of these interestingly enough from Ireland, men espousing the position of the established church did not write or preach on the covenant.[1] The fact that both these exceptions were men who held moderating views only throws further into relief the lack of covenant theology among ministers of the established church. Richard Hooker in his Ecclesiastical Polity (1599) did endorse social contract but not the idea of the divine-human covenant. No English creed or affirmation of faith refers to the covenant until the appearance of the Westminster Confession (1644), which was actually a Presbyterian document.[1]

---

[1] One was George Downame (? -1634), a Christ College fellow and contemporary colleague of William Perkins, who was known as a Puritan while at the University, but who later became a confirmed Episcopalian though never an extremist in his attitude toward non-conformists. In light of his background and early convictions it is not surprising that Downame, later appointed Bishop of Derry and a chaplain to King James, wrote The Covenant of Grace (Dublin,1631). The other was James Ussher (1581-1656), a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied under Walter Travers,an active Puritan of Cartwright's day, Ussher taught at Trinity for a period of years and later became bishop of Armaugh. He was chiefly responsible for composing the Irish Articles (1615) where the covenant is mentioned, but in his A Body of Divinity (London,1645) he refers both to a covenant of works and a "second contract," a new covenant of grace. (pp.110, 139-140 in 1702 ed.) It is significant that Ussher urged the appointment of Richard Sibbes as Provost of Trinity College in 1626, (Cf. Works, v. 15, pp.361,363. Letters to George Abbott, Archbishop of Canterbury) and when he became bishop offered John Preston a professorship of divinity which Preston declined (1621). (Works, v. 1, p.56). There seems little doubt that Ussher was a warm admirer of men whose writings display a central concern with the idea of God's covenant.

By and large the Puritans who accepted the covenant idea were men more deeply concerned with the substance of religion than with questions of ecclesiastical discipline and ritual. Not that they were not also interested in matters of church order -- far to the contrary in most cases, but their essential interest in practical religion led them far beyond the controversial area of church polity. Fundamentally the covenant for them was an idea illuminating theology; only secondarily was it applied to the church or to civil society with their various social relationships. The covenant writers may be said to be primarily interested in the essence of Christian life, the relation of man and God. Because of the basic religious connotation of the covenant idea it is amazing that in a day replete with bitter and heated religious controversies it evoked no argument. The covenant itself never became an issue of debate between non-conformists and conformists, or even among those within non-conformist circles. This absence of theological dispute over the covenant may be accounted for in large part by the validation of the idea in Scriptures. Certainly it indicates that the introduction of the idea of covenant was not regarded as unorthodox.

---

[1] The Irish Articles (1615) might be considered a possible exception, although the term covenant only appears in it once and then only in a sub-heading.

That the great majority of covenant writers studied at Cambridge is not surprising in view of that University's reputation as the training center and "hot-bed" of Puritanism. Of those who prominently developed the covenant idea but were not Cambridge graduates — chiefly John Ball, John Davenport, Robert Harris, and Edward Leigh — all studied at Oxford. It is significant that in a day when the English clergy was a relatively untrained ministry the preachers of covenant doctrine were without exception a highly educated group. Virtually no one was not a University man, and a number were recognized not only as able and influential preachers but as sound scholars.

Sixteenth Century Covenant Writers.

It was from Cambridge that Thomas Cartwright and the "disciplinarians" led the first open attack upon the existing church government. Heretofore, the Puritans had argued for a reformation of ritual and ceremonies, but the controversy between Whitgift and Cartwright, and the Admonitions to Parliament (1572) revolved about matters of ecclesiastical polity. The issue was not one of doctrine but of church government. And it was also Cartwright (1550-1603) who wrote one of the earliest treatises which presented the Christian religion in covenant terms.

To say that Cartwright was an early interpreter of the idea does not mean that the word "covenant" is not to be found in the writings of earlier English churchmen. An examination of the collected works of certain previous reformers reveals scattered use of the term among such men as Nicholas Ridley, John Philpott, and Thomas Cranmer. They, however, do no more than mention the sacraments as seals of God's "couenante,"[1] and do not amplify beyond the mere reference to the word. Nor do the writings of the Marian exiles, some of whom became leaders in the Elizabethan church, reveal more than similar casual references. While the idea is known, it appears to have been only accepted in the context of sacraments. Not until the 1580s was the covenant employed in England as a central idea in the interpretation of Christianity. Even the epistles written by the Puritans around 1570-72 against the practices of the bishops,[2] make no mention of the covenant idea. This merely reinforces the conclusion that covenant thinking, even in Puritan circles, was not in evidence in England until the late sixteenth century, and even then only among a few.

There is little point in trying to ascertain who first elaborated upon the covenant in theology. The task would be difficult anyhow in light of the common practise of not printing treatises until long after they were first written or delivered and often not until after the author's death. But a list of early covenant writers would certainly include John Dod (1549-1645), Richard Greenham (1535?-1594?), Thomas Cartwright, and William Perkins (1558-1602). Dod matriculated at, and later served as a fellow in, Jesus College, Cambridge; Cartwright took his degree from St. Johns College, and was first a fellow there and then at Trinity; the other two were Christ's College men.

Greenham first came to Cambridge in 1559, and following graduation and a period of tutoring left, some seven years before Perkins entered Christ's, to take the church at nearby Dry Dayton. However,

---

1. *Writings of Thomas Cranmer* (Religious Tract Society, London), "Catechismus," p.201; "Book of the Sacrament," p.236.
2. Cf. Fenner, D., *A Parte of a Register* (Edinburgh, 1593) and Frere, W. H. & Douglas, C.E. (eds.), *Puritan Manifestoes*, (London,1907)

Greenham frequently preached at St. Mary's in Cambridge, and it is highly likely that Perkins came to know him in this connection. At all events, Perkins seems to have joined the informal discussion group Greenham established at Dry Dayton, which drew a number of the Puritans together for study and conversations and which formed a nucleus of the "spiritual brotherhood" at Cambridge described so vividly by William Haller.[1] Cartwright also participated in this group, as did other Puritan stalwarts, notably Arthur Hildersam and Laurence Chaderton.

Despite the greater reputation of other Puritans of this period, Greenham stands out as an influential leader. He was regarded a "moderate Puritan,"[2] no doubt because, despite his pronounced Puritan leanings, he opposed the Mar-Prelate tracts and even withdrew his earlier espousal of Cartwright's cause. Greenham was more deeply concerned with questions of Christian living than with challenging the authorities on discipline, and thus represents a different type of Puritan than those concerned primarily with reforming ritual and church government. He gained a reputation for preaching a practical doctrine, combining an acute social consciousness with a deep Christian faith. His realistic translation of his faith into action is illustrated by his arranging in the midst of a grain shortage and the suffering of the poor to secure and make available to the needy corn at prices below the prevailing rates.[3] Greenham's sermons were published posthumously and present a developed view of the covenant, in which he distinguished between what he called general and particular covenants.

---

[1] Haller, W., The Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1936), pp.48-82.

[2] Dictionary of National Biography, "Richard Greenham."

[3] Wright, L.B., "William Perkins, Elizabethan Apostle of Practical Divinity," Huntington Library Quarterly, vol. III, p.173 (1939-40)

Particular covenants are subsumed under the general,[1] and are undertaken either as "meanes to come to some good, or else as bridle to auoide some euill." By his counsel to covenant "to pricke vs to good or stay vs from some euill" Greenham amplifies for day to day living the covenant in baptism, which is the general covenant under which each Christian lives. Greenham turns to the Old Testament for his illustrations of particular covenants,[2] and his practical religious turn of mind is clearly shown in his warning against entering into those "wicked or foolish vowes which hinder Christian religion" and which "haue not their warrant out of the word of God."[3] Within such a category he places vows of chastity, vows against eating flesh or drinking wine and against wearing ornate clothing. While recognizing the difficulties which hinder a man's keeping his covenants, Greenham is quick to point out that though a man fail in the performance of some particular covenant, he need not be excluded from God so long as he yields "honour and obedience" to the general covenant. As long as "there was no final intent to fall from the Lord, we shall surely finde mercie and pardon at his hand." Keeping covenant he interprets not as being able to fulfill the covenant in any outward performance but in "inward vertue," in "an inward and carefull receiuing...with a full intent to practise when God shall giue iust occasion thereof."[4] The covenant being "a streighter thing" and more binding than a mere promise is the means "for the stirring vp of our selues" and the "more surely to tie vs" to God.[5]

---

[1] Greenham, R., _Works_ (London,1612), p.589

[2] Cf. II Chronicles xv.12; Nehemiah x; Ezra ix; Nehemiah v; Jeremiah xxxiv.

[3] Greenham, _op. cit._, pp.591,592.

[4] _ibid._, p.590.

[5] _ibid._, pp.589-590.

Greenham not only writes of covenant in the relationship of the individual to God but also in the political and social orders among men. These social covenants he does not describe fully, but they are considered concrete manifestations of the one covenant which binds God and man. There is, however, no indication that Greenham advocated a church covenant.

While "covenant" is noted in the published sermons and treatises of John Dod and Arthur Hildersam (1563-1632), neither man interprets the idea in terms of ethical living as noted in Greenham. Both Dod and Hildersam set forth the familar view of baptism as "the Seale of the eternall Couenant," and of the sacraments as "seales of the couenant of grace."[1] Dod gives evidence of some additional familiarity with the idea, for in referring to Jeremiah (31:31) and Ezekial (36:27) he develops the theme of God's covenant promising the forgiveness of sins and the writing of laws in man's heart. Also he calls attention to the assurance which is ours by virtue of God being "bound by Couenant unto us to be our loving Father and gracious God forever."[2] Incidentally both these Puritan preachers use the phrase "covenant of grace" which was not encountered in Greenham's works.

Thomas Cartwright is particularly remembered for his championship of Genevan church polity, but one of his lesser known writings, A Treatise of Christian Religion,[3] not only shows an acquaintance with the idea of covenant but presents an interpretation of two covenants, "the Couenant of Workes" and the covenant of grace. In this catechism Cartwright sets forth an exposition of doctrine in which "covenant" describes the relationship between God and man. The idea of covenant does not seem to appear in his other writings, nor does he apply it to the social orders.

---

[1] Dod, John, Ten Sermons (1621) pp.54,134. Hildersam, A., The Doctrine of Communicating Worthily in the Lords Supper (1619) p.47.

[2] Dod, John, Seven Godlie and Fruitfvll Sermons (1614) p.33.

[3] London, 1616.

William Perkins followed Greenham in his concern for practical theology and in the acceptance of the covenant idea. Perkins far surpassed Greenham in the influence of his personality and writings, but the similarity of Perkins' approach and content plainly indicates an indebtedness to Greenham. Perkins made fuller use of the covenant idea than any other sixteenth century Englishman.

Perkins entered Cambridge with no intention of studying for the ministry. His early interests were astrology and magic and he acquired a reputation for drunkenness, "recklessness and profanity." The story of his conversion, of how the taunt of a woman on the street about "drunken Perkins" brought about a crisis in his life, is a gem of Puritan history.[1] He turned to the study of theology at Christ's College, and for eleven years prior to his marriage in 1595 was a fellow at Christ's, where he tutored, among others, William Ames. Perkins' whole professional life was spent at Cambridge, and till his death he was lecturer at Great St. Andrew's Church "where people flocked in great numbers to hear him."[2] He was reputed a "singularly earnest and effective preacher" and looked upon as a prophet and preacher of great practical wisdom. Ames, in paying tribute to his teacher in later years, spoke of him as one who had in Cambridge "for many years held forth a burning and shining light, the sparks whereof did flie abroad into all the corners of the land."[3] Perkins' numerous treatises proved so popular that they were translated into several languages and were still being reprinted thirty years after his death. Armilla Aurea,[1] his most widely distributed volume, first published in 1590, went to fifteen editions in twenty years. "Few preachers," says Louis Wright, "were read more extensively over so long a period."[2]

---

[1] Cf. Peile, John, Christ's College (1900) p.100.
[2] Dictionary of National Biography, "William Perkins."
[3] Preface to Baynes, Paul, The Diocesans Tryall (1621).

Perkins' popularity rested in part upon the practical tone of his preaching. He was probably the foremost Puritan casuist in the then contemporary meaning of casuistry as a system of applied morality. He was painstaking in presenting Scriptural injunction for the numerous problems of everyday living, and his sermons dealt with a wide range of theological and ethical questions. He highlighted the duties and obligations of men under all circumstances. He followed a clear and logical pattern in his presentations, usually first expounding a doctrine, then interpreting its meaning, and finally listing the duties which followed from it. Like Greenham he dealt with common everyday experiences, and the scope of his concern with problems of conscience outstrips any of the early Puritans.

Perkins was famed as a staunch defender of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination.[3] The fact that directly or indirectly he was involved in two theological disputes illustrates his position as a recognized champion of Calvinism.[4] Had Perkins lived a little longer he undoubtedly would have become involved in a debate with James Arminius, who assumed the task of refuting Perkins' views on predestination but was unable to complete his lengthy treatise before Perkins' death. That Perkins should be the center of such theological controversies attests to his advocacy of an "unflinching Calvinism," but it also serves to document the presence of new currents of thought challenging the accepted and traditional viewpoints.

---

[1] Translated The Golden Chain.

[2] Wright, op. cit., p.173.

[3] Quite probably Perkins was most indebted for his theological orientation to his tutor, Laurence Chaderton (1536?-1640) who became master of Emmanuel College upon its founding and was known for his strict interpretation of Calvinism.

[4] Peter Baro, although ordained by Calvin himself, was questioning Calvin's theory of predestination, and in a sermon challenging the Lambeth Articles he attacked Perkins for his views. William Whitaker defended Perkins, as did Chaderton, who accused Baro of bringing "new doctrines into England. Baro probably was an early fore-runner of the Arminian teachings so prevalent in the English church later on. In 1590 the appearance of Perkins' Armilla Aurea occasioned William Barret's attack upon Calvinism from the pulpit of St. Mary's, though Archbishop Whitgift forced him to recant ihs unorthodox views.

Perkins not only interpreted theology but also sociology in covenant terms. Far more explicitly than Greenham, Perkins defined all of man's relationships by covenants -- covenants with God and civil covenants. Covenants, he affirmed, are made to establish peace in any relation of man beyond himself. Just as God makes a covenant with his people, so even does Satan make many a covenant with men.[1] A man must either be in covenant with God or perish eternally, for the covenant of grace is "absolutely necessary for salvation."[2] To be in covenant is identified with being elected; in fact, the covenant is the "outward means of executing the decree of election."[3] God becomes our God by this covenant of grace in which God promises remission of sins and life everlasting and requires faith from man.[4]

While covenant thinking runs all through Perkins' writings, it appears most fully in his major work, *Armilla Aurea*. Again it is the Old Testament which is referred to for illustration and precedent.[5] Perkins draws a clear distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, these being two in kind, substance, and nature.[6] He

---

1.Perkins, Wm., *Works* (1608-31) II. pp.401,614.
2.*ibid*., I. p.73; III. p.646.
3.*ibid*., II. p.312.
4.*ibid*., II. p.293.
5.Jeremiah 31:31 is singularly important, though other passages such as
Hosea ii.18,19; Ezra xxxvi.25 and Malachi iii.1 are mentioned too.
6.Perkins, *op. cit*., II. p.299.

attempts in the barest outline to suggest a history of the covenant by recalling the first revelation of the covenant of grace after the fall of Adam, its renewal with Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and David successively, and then its fullest revelation in Christ. He also divides the covenant of grace into old and new, corresponding to the Old and New Testaments, though he affirms they are one in substance.

Perkins takes pains to point out that all persons are not in God's covenant.[1] The very first revelation of the covenant to Adam and Eve rested upon the distinction between men, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Nor in the covenant with Abraham are all nations included, but always some are in covenant and some rejected. Mankind is composed of both children of the flesh and children of the promise. Perkins elaborates these views in his answer to theoretical or actual objections to the covenant idea, and fits the covenant into a framework of divine decrees of predestination and reprobation.

A second point stressed in Perkins' writings is the mutual consent and mutual conditions of the covenant. It is established by God, yet requires certain obligations on man's part. Perkins lays stress on the moral obedience necessary in this new relationship of man to God; at the same time he observes that God becomes our God not by any merit of ours but by means of his grace through the covenant.

Among other leading sixteenth century Puritans, Laurence Chaderton's sermons give indication of some use of "covenant." He long held a position of leadership among Puritans through his mastership of Emmanuel College from its founding in 1584 until 1623. He was related by marriage to two prominent Puritans; one of his sisters married

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., I. pp.113,167-8,516.

William Whitaker, later master of St. Johns College, Cambridge, and another married Ezekiel Culverwel. Culverwel's Treatise of Faith (1622) contains only casual references to the covenant. Richard Sibbes in his preface to this volume remarks that the work "supposeth a reader grounded in the knowledge of the covenant of grace and such like." Evidently by Sibbes' time the covenant was a fairly common idea. But Culverwell himself does not seem to have really formulated a covenant theory. Little is known of his life beyond the facts that he was admitted to Emmanuel College, did marry Chaderton's sister, and was suspended at least once by the authorities for his non-conformity.[1] Even the dates of his birth and death are unavailable. All of his writings were published posthumously through the efforts of his nephew, William Gouge, about whom more will be said later.

Thomas Playfere (1561?-1609) made some reference to the idea of covenant in his published sermons, but never developed the concept. He, like Cartwright, graduated from St. Johns and remained as a fellow. Playfere, in fact, succeeded Cartwright in the University chair of Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, which he held from 1596 until his death.[2]

The Early Separatists

Robert Browne (c1550-c1631) falls into a somewhat different category from the men so far mentioned in that he at one time advocated and effected separation from the established state church. Browne was at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (A.B.1572) when Chaderton was teaching in the University, and Greenham was preaching at Dry Dayton. The latter at least was well acquainted with Browne since Browne studied informally under Greenham and lived in Greenham's home for the greater part of a year when he returned to the environs of Cambridge just before going to Norwich in 1580.[1] Soon after arriving at Norwich Browne and Richard Harrison (another Corpus Christi graduate 1567) organized their church based upon a covenant.

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "Ezekiel Culverwel."
[2] ibid., "Thomas Playfere."

However, Browne's use of the covenant was much broader than its mere application to ecclesiastical society as an examination of his *A Booke which Sheweth the Life and Manner of all true Christians* (Middelburgh,1582) clearly indicates. For Browne the covenant was essentially the basis of order and right relations. To enter into a covenant with God was to admit God's sovereignty and submit to his government. Likewise Browne interprets covenants pertaining to the household, the church, and the commonwealth as covenants of government. The important thing for one under such government is obedience to its particular laws. God, Browne writes, "*shalbe* our God so long as wee keepe vnder his gouernement and obey his lawes; and no longer." To keep covenant means first and foremost "leading a godly and Christian life."[2]

Browne took issue with Cartwright's idea that people or churches can be in covenant simply because they have the "worde of God put in their mouthes" and "the sacraments as seales of the covenant;" for Browne there can be no covenant "where we are not turned from iniquity."[3] Wherever the practise of the covenant is rejected and there is not "vpright and good profession," men cannot say they have covenant with God. Browne believed the church must be gathered only of "the worthie," that is, those who keep the covenant. He readily admitted the presence of "hypocrites in euery church," and yet asserts "if any make an open and grosse breach then Paul hath written vnto vs that we company not together with such."[1] This accounts for Browne's continual emphasis upon a "willing couenante." An agreement, he contended, could not be morally binding unless it be voluntarily and deliberately entered into. This centrality upon ethical obligations under the covenant is marked in Browne.

---

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography*, "Robert Browne."

[2] Browne,R.,*A Booke which Sheweth...* (no pagination)

[3] Browne makes reference here to Isaiah lix, Jeremiah xxxiv;Exodus xix.

Though Browne returned to the ministry of the established church, the theory of separation be once avowed grew beyond his controlling. That he tried to stem the movement is evident from his attack upon Henry Barrow and Hohn Greenwood.[2] But even the drastic step taken by the civil authorities of hanging Barrow and Greenwood (1593) did not halt separatism but simply drove its adherents overseas. Barrow (1550?-1593), a Cambridge law graduate (Clare College, 1570) who later turned to the study of theology, devoted little attention to the covenant in his writings, although his familarity with the idea is apparent. He agreed with Browne that only to the church which has been truly gathered and constituted does the covenant belong.[3] "Wicked assemblies and adulterous churches," he continued, have broken the covenant, and in this category he placed the English church.[4] "Gods Couenant only belongeth vnto the faithful." Barrow did draw a distinction between an "outward covenant," to which by their fruits it is possible to affirm that certain men belong, and God's secret election of which man cannot judge.[5] Yet he argues that nowhere does Scripture assert that God's covenant is made without "our faith and obedience vnto him."[1] Again this stress upon the covenant being broken unless there is obedience to its demands points to the ethical obligations of a covenant relation voluntarily and individually assumed.

---

[1] Browne, R., An Answer to M. Cartwright (1583/4) p.11. (quotes I Corinthians iii.11.)

[2] Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, "Robert Browne," & "Henry Barrow."

[3] Barrow, H., A True Description Out of the Word of God of the Visible Church (1589) pp.2,7.

[4] Barrow, H., A Briefe Discoverie of the False Chvrch (1590) pp.26,157.

[5] Barrow, H., A Plaine Refutation of M. Giffards Booke... (1591) pp.89-90.

The period marked by Barrow's imprisonment and death was a time of persecution for all who advocated doctrines tending toward separation. Among those who fled England in 1593 was Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622/3), a Caius College, Cambridge, graduate, who accepted Browne's theory of the independence of particular churches. In 1596 Ainsworth became teacher of the Amsterdam church of which Francis Johnson (1562-1618) was minister. These two collaborated until Ainsworth reluctantly withdrew in 1610 to form still another church.[2] Johnson, a fellow at Christ's College, had been imprisoned and then expelled from the University for his assertion that church government should be by elders (1588/9), and Perkins was among those who petitioned for his re-instatement. Johnson, however, crossed to Middelburg, where he became pastor of the church earlier served by Cartwright. As yet he was no separatist but an advocate of reform within the national church. During this period he was influenced by Barrow's book _A Plaine Refvtation of M. Giffards Booke_.. and determined to visit Barrow in the Fleet prison. With Greenwood's help he then formed a separatist church in London to be governed by the elders. For this he was again imprisoned, and among his visitors in the Clink was Henry Jacob, who vainly tried to bring him back into the fellowship of the established church. Upon his release Johnson went to Amsterdam where he became pastor of a separatist congregation exiled from London.[1]

---

[1] Barrow, H., _op. cit._, p.61

[2] The issue between these men was one of church government, with Johnson desiring to commit power to the elders while Ainsworth wished to place the power of church government in the hands of the congregation as a whole. In this dispute these men reflected respectively the more aristocratic views of Barrow as compared to Browne's advocacy of democracy in church government.

Despite their disagreement over the question of where the power of church government rested, both Johnson and Ainsworth accepted the idea of a true church being constituted by members bound together by a covenant. Both were more concerned with questions on the character of the church than with doctrine, and both engaged in controversial writing. Ainsworth's A True Confession of Faith (1596), however, does indicate his acceptance of the idea of the covenant of grace as pertinent to Christian doctrine. God's covenant with the individual is frequently mentioned in various of Johnson's works, although he never seems to have described the idea in any detail. The chief covenant contribution of both these men lay in their advocacy of the church covenant.

Among those whom Francis Johnson tutored at Christ's College was John Smyth (c1570-1612). Upon graduation Smyth served as a fellow at Christ's (1594-98) and then following two short pastorates he accepted the separatist position. About 1606 he became pastor of a separatist group at Gainsborough, which under his leadership migrated to Amsterdam. For awhile this group was aligned with Johnson and Ainsworth, but soon seceded to become a second English church in that city. Smyth had at Gainsborough constituted this group into a church by a covenant, but later (about 1609) he repudiated this act in light of his new belief that only by baptism is a church formed.[2] His baptist convictions resulted in his renouncing the idea of a church covenant, although he continued to affirm the covenant of grace as God's way of salvation. He plainly rejected the view that the Old Testament was of equal merit or importance for Christians as the New, and so argued that the covenant of the Old Testament, exemplified by God's covenant with Abraham, was a carnal covenant supplanted by the covenant of the New Testament which was of the Spirit.

---

[1] Dexter, H.M., Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years (1870) pp.265-6. Also Dictionary of National Biography, "Francis Johnson."

[2] Dictionary of National Biography, "John Smyth." Also Whitley, W.T., "Biography of John Smyth," in The Works of John Smyth (Cambridge, 1915.)

The writings of other separatists also indicate acceptance of the covenant idea, and especially of the church covenant. But while these treatises indicate a widened acquaintance with the concept, they do not add to its development. The separatists, being open to widespread criticism for their advocacy of separatism, were forced to devote a large portion of their writings to explain and defend their position. For the most part their works fall into the category of controversial tracts and few are concerned with positive affirmations of Christian faith.[1]

The Ames Circle

The turn of the century brought new advocates of covenant theology, who in the early decades might roughly be divided into two groups. The one revolved about William Ames, while the key figure in the second was Richard Sibbes. Obviously the dividing of men into any such circles is bound to be arbitrary and misleading at some points. Yet each of these men deeply influenced and gave leadership to a fairly distinct group of men who adopted the covenant idea.

There is little question of the common indebtedness of both Ames and Sibbes to William Perkins, and yet they placed a somewhat different emphasis upon the covenant. The difference, however, was more relative than radical. For example, Ames followed Perkins more closely in a concern in matters of practical religion. He too elaborated upon and applied Christian principles to "cases of conscience" and maintained a vigorous ethical emphasis. Sibbes, on the other hand, while also acknowledging the leadership of Perkins, evidenced a more marked evangelical zeal. He was more interested in personal piety, and his writings portray a deep introspective interest in the topic of man's salvation. The ethical slant is not entirely lacking but it is definitely submerged in the more fundamental concern of Sibbes phrase? "getting right with God." Furthermore, Ames was seriously concerned with matters of church government and discipline and he himself fled to Holland to escape persecution at the hands of the authorities. Sibbes in his writings gave little attention to the shortcomings of the English church, and although he was silenced once by the authorities and upon another occasion cited before the High Commission, he remained in England. In sum, then, with respect to the idea of covenant, Ames was interested not only in the theological covenant between God and man, but in the application of the covenant to all of man's relationships in organized society. In comparison, Sibbes' primary concern was with the covenant as it characterized the personal relationship of God and the individual believer. Sibbes employed the covenant to answer the basic question of man's salvation; Ames' interest in the covenant was to encourage men to live well to God.

---

[1] John Canne (1590?-1667), Ainsworth's successor in the second English church at Amsterdam, is probably the most important among these other separatists. Richard Clyfton, Thomas Helwys, and John Robinson (at least for a period) would be others in such a list.

William Ames (1571-1633) exerted far-reaching influence among Puritans, but most especially with that group which maintained a non-separatist but congregational theory of church polity. The persecution of non-conformists in the reign of the Stuarts drove many of these men to Holland and numbers of them eventually crossed the Atlantic to the new world. Ames was the most renowned of those tutored by William Perkins at Christ's College. Following a period when he tutored at Christ's, during which time his non-conformist convictions evidently must have been maturing, Ames was suspended from preaching in 1609 because he condemned card and dice playing. He sought refuge in Holland and there lived the remainder of his life. He taught first at a theological school at Leyden, but was prevented from being named principal due to the pressure exerted by the church party in England. In 1618-19 he attended the Synod of Dort, but only in an unofficial capacity. In 1622 he accepted the chair of theology at Franeker,[1] and four years later became rector of the University. Ill-health forced him to resign his Franeker responsibilities, and he went to Rotterdam as pastor of the English church, only to die the same year.

Ames' covenant writing was more explicit and detailed than any so far considered. His chief work, The Marrow of Sacred Divinity,[2] bases theology upon the idea of God's covenant. It presents full discussions of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace with their representative characteristics. His Scriptural references are fundamentally from the Old Testament — Jeremiah xxxi and xxxiii, Genesis xv,etc. — and are the familar passages mentioned by others. In addition Ames quotes various New Testament verses to support his interpretation.[3] Though these New Testament passages do not directly contain the word covenant, they are offered as substantiation of the new administration and new spirit of the covenant since Christ's coming.

---

[1] Rackham,H., Christ's College in Former Days (Cambridge,1939) reports that only the personal intervention of Prince Maurice overcame the attempt of the English prelates to prevent Ames' appointment to this post as they had successfully done in the Leyden situation a few years before. (p.35)

[2] Medulla Theologicae, Amsterdam, 1623,1627,1628,1634,1641; English translation, London,1642.

[3] Hebrew ix.16; Acts i.39 & iii.25; Romans iv.16; Galatians iii.21-29; Colossians ii.14-17; II Corinthians iii.6 & 18.

Ames displays his interest in history by presenting the covenant as the chief factor in the story of man's life and salvation through the ages. In this historical portrayal he not only separates the covenant of works and the covenant of grace but differentiates the various eras of the covenant from Adam to the present time. He interprets the covenant of grace as a new relationship of man to God involving promises on God's part and obligations on man's while emphasizing both the free grace of God and the ethical responsibilities of men. He was deeply concerned that men keep the covenant; not only that they accept the doctrine but live under it faithfully. The covenant essentially is God's "speciall and proper way of governing reasonable Creatures."[1] In this definition, as well as in his application of the covenant to civil and ecclesiastical society, Ames' views serve as a reminder of Robert Browne, only Ames went further in exploring the substance of the covenant.

It was in Holland that Ames became acquainted with John Robinson and Henry Jacobs. Robinson (1576-1625), who had studied at Emmanuel College and been much influenced by Perkins while at Cambridge,[2] was at this period (about 1611) a separatist, having brought some hundred members of the Scrooby company to Leyden in 1609 and there become their pastor. Henry Jacob (1563-1624) was no separatist but a congregational Puritan who believed in the necessity of reforming the church of England through the establishment within that church of particular congregations each capable of managing its own affairs.[1] Jacob graduated at Oxford (St. Mary's, 1583) and there may possibly have come to know Robert Parker (1564?-1614), a Magdalen man and Jacob's University contemporary,[2] who fled England in company with Ames.

---

[1] Ames, Wm., Marrow of Sacred Divinity, (1643) p.47
[2] Wright, op. cit., p.195.

Some sources indicate that as a result of conversations at Leyden among Ames, Parker, Robinson and Jacob, that Jacob came to accept Ames' view of church polity.[3] This conclusion may be open to question, however, since Jacob's known views before he left England already closely approximated those of Ames. But there is evidence that Robinson, subsequent to his contacts with Ames, Parker, and Jacob, gave up his more extreme separatist views in favor of the non-separatist congregational position of Ames and Jacob.[4]

When Ames left Franeker and assumed the pastoral responsibility of the English church at Rotterdam, it is significant that his two associates there were Hugh Peters (1598-1660) and Thomas Hooker (1586-1647). Hooker was an Emmanuel graduate, who had served as a fellow from 1609-18 during the mastership of Chaderton. Upon leaving Cambridge Hooker took a rectorship in Surrey, but in 1630 was cited before the High Commission and fled to Holland. For two years he was pastor of the English church at Delft before he went to Rotterdam for the express purpose of associating himself with Ames. Upon Ames' death Hooker sailed for New England in company with John Cotton and Samuel Stone, and is especially remembered for his leadership in the Hartford colony.

---

[1] This is the same Henry Jacob mentioned above (p.53) as unsuccessfully trying to direct Francis Johnson from his separatist ways.

[2] Parker graduated in 1582 and both men stayed on for their M.A.

[3] Dictionary of National Biography, "Henry Jacob."

[4] Whereas in 1610 Robinson had defended separatism in tracts against Richard Bernard, in 1618 he decried complete separation in a debate against John Smyth and Thomas Helwys. Cf. Dexter, op. cit., p.395, and Dictionary of National Biography, "John Robinson."

Hugh Peters, a Trinity College, Cambridge, graduate, had been converted while at Cambrudge largely through the influence of Thomas Hooker. He preached for awhile in Essex and then lectured in London, until being suspected of heterodoxy he too left for Holland about 1629. While in London he is said to have come under the influence of Richard Sibbes, William Gouge, and John Davenport.[1] Hugh Peters preached Ames' funeral sermon. In 1635 he left Holland for Boston, but returned again to England in 1641 to take a leading role as a chaplain in the Parliamentary army.

It is readily apparent not merely in his theology but also in his beliefs regarding church organization and government that Ames personally knew and was highly esteemed by many of the leaders of the early migrations to New England. While all these men -- Parker, Jacob, Robinson, Peters, Hooker -- were greatly concerned with ecclesiastical reformation, their writings indicate adoption of the idea of the covenant in theology and espousal of the church covenant. Probably Robinson and Hooker of this group left the most explicit covenant writings, with Hooker being much the more zealous in his advocacy of the idea in such works as The Faithful Covenanter (1644) and The Covenant of Grace Opened (1649). The latter, describing what the covenant of grace is and who the parties are, is an argument for infant baptism based upon the idea of God's covenant.

Not England but Holland and New England were the scenes of these men's labor and fellowship. Of those mentioned only Henry Jacob and Hugh Peters ever returned to England. Jacob formed a congregational church in London in 1616, but in 1622 he too crossed the Atlantic for Virginia where two years later he died.[1] Hugh Peters, as already mentioned, returned to England from New England by the civil war period. Of the others, Robert Parker died in Holland; and though John Robinson died in Leyden, many of his congregation had gone to New England in 1620 and he too had planned to follow eventually. Ames himself was urged to come to Boston and likely would have gone had his health permitted. His family migrated to New England after his death, and his books were donated to the Harvard College library.[2] Ames' influence in New England was far-reaching. His theological writings were considered basic reading, and his Marrow became a virtual textbook in Puritan circles.

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "Hugh Peters."

Ames' influence in England is not so clearly apparent. But whether directly influenced by Ames or not, there were some covenant writers in England who must certainly have been acquainted with him. Chief among this group was Thomas Taylor (1576-1635), who attended Christ's College and served as a fellow there from 1599-1604.[3] It is therefore quite possible that he studied under Perkins and quite certain that he served as a fellow tutor with Ames and Paul Baynes. After leaving Cambridge, Taylor ministered to churches in Reading and London, and was at least once silenced by the authorities. Among Puritans he was esteemed "a profitable writer" and "painfull preacher." His various works, collected and published after his death, were mainly sermons which carry numerous references to the covenant, especially interpreting to his hearers the "New Covenant."

---

[1] Burrage, C., The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research, (Cambridge, 1912) I. p.319. Evidently clear evidence is lacking as to where Jacob died, since the Dictionary of National Biography says he died in London following his return from Virginia.

[2] The influence of Ames and the University at Franeker upon Harvard College is symbolized by Harvard's adoption of the motto, "Christo et Ecclesiae," which was also the motto of the Franeker institution as well as the subject of Ames' inaugural address as rector of the University. Cf. Clapp, Clifford, "Motto of Harvard College: Christo et Ecclesiae," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXV. pp.59-83.

[3] Dictionary of National Biography, "Thomas Taylor." Peile, op.cit. p.105

Ezekiel Rogers (1584?-1661) was also a Christ College man who was a student there when Ames and Taylor were tutors, and received his B.A. 1604. After a period in the ministry in England, during which time he was suspended, he finally in 1638 took ship for New England. Rogers' ability as a catechist is shown in his "The Chief Grounds of the Christian Religion" (1642). This work gives evidence of some covenant thinking, but the idea does not seem to have been amplified by him.

The chief exponents of the covenant in England in the first decades of the seventeenth century, however, were the men next to be considered.

The Sibbes Circle.

Contemporary with those Puritans whose activities centered in Holland and New England, and as a whole more important for tracing English covenant thinking, was another group of Puritans who centered their ministry largely in Cambridge and London. Many of them, it should be remembered, had been Cambridge contemporaries of men in "the Ames circle" and had been influenced by Perkins, Ames, etc. That they remained closely related to some of "the Ames group" is shown by the invitations extended to some of them, notably Cotton, Davenport, and Thomas Goodwin, to come to New England.

The influential figure of Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) stands out within this second group of seventeenth century covenant theologians. He graduated from St. John's College and became a fellow there in 1601. He credited his religious conversion the next year to the preaching of Paul Baynes, Perkins' successor as lecturer at St. Andrew's Church. In 1615 Sibbes was deprived of his teaching responsibilities, as well as his lectureship at Holy Trinity, by the High Commission because of his non-conformist views. The following year he secured the pastorate of Gray's Inn, London, and in 1626 was named master of St. Catherine's Hall, Cambridge. To these two positions he devoted the remainder of his life.[1]

Sibbes was reputed "a preacher of good note," and since he was frequently invited to occupy the pulpit at St. Mary's, the church of the whole University at Cambridge, it may be assumed that he was both popular and effective. He brought about the conversion of John Cotton, and is credited with turning Thomas Goodwin from Arminian tendencies. His friendship and admiration for other Puritans is seen from his having written introductions for books penned by Paul Baynes, Henry Scudder, Ezekiel Culverwel, John Preston, John Ball, John Smyth, and Richard Capel. He himself wrote voluminously; his collected writings comprising seven large volumes.

All of Sibbes' writings savour of his deep pietism, and are full of constant references to and descriptions of the covenant of grace. The idea of God's covenant with man was central in Sibbes' view of the Christian life. Where Perkins and Ames, however, were strongly practical and ethical, the major emphasis in Sibbes may be termed soteriological. His foremost concern was the assurance of man's salvation. The good news of the gospel is God's readiness and willingness to relate himself to men again in a new covenant, after man having broken the first covenant is now completely estranged from God. It therefore behooves men to take heart and to insure that they are in covenant with God. Sibbes devoted scant attention to outlining the obligations of the covenant or to tracing its history. He is intent in urging men to enter into covenant and to take advantage of God's grace. It is the blessings of the covenant, God's promises, that are important in Sibbes' interpretation of the meaning and message of the covenant. He speaks of God's mercy more than God's providence, and by the same token his idea of covenant is one offering comfort and surety more than imposing duties. Practically nothing is said in Sibbes' writings about the first covenant but all attention is centered upon the covenant of grace. More particularly, it is the covenant of grace now, since Christ's coming, which Sibbes is interested in presenting.

---

[1] Cf. Grosart, A.B., "Introduction", Works of Richard Sibbes (Edinburgh, 1862) vol. I. Also Dictionary of National Biography, "Richard Sibbes."

Among Sibbes' friends John Preston (1587-1628) was one of the closest. Preston as master of Emmanuel is said to have helped Sibbes secure the mastership of St. Catherine's Hall. Gosart describes Preston and Sibbes, from the time of the mastership of the latter, as

> "the two great centres of influence in Cambridge, in so far as the preaching of the gospel was concerned. They loved one another with a love that was something wonderful...They were never found apart when anything was to be done for their Master."[1]

Preston had a diverse early career which is somewhat reminiscent of Perkins', only even more random. He matriculated at King's College (1604) with an interest in music; when he found that he was able to make little progress in that field, he transferred to Queen's College in 1606, where he first considered a diplomatic career and then turned to philosophy. In 1609 he was chosen a fellow at Queen's, but from philosophy he soon turned to the study of medicine and astrology. Finally in 1611 he attended St. Mary's and heard a "plain evangelical sermon" preached by John Cotton, then a fellow at Emmanuel, which led him to the study of theology. In spite of his early checkered career, and a relatively short life, Preston soon distinguished himself as a theologian, and in 1622 became preacher at Lincoln's Inne, where "crowds flocked to hear him."[1]

---

[1] Grosart, op. cit., pp. l-li.

Chaderton had been reluctant to resign his long-held mastership of Emmanuel for fear someone with Arminian leanings would succeed him. But he was under pressure from Puritans who expressed the need for a younger and more energetic master. Preston's name was proposed, and while Chaderton reportedly thought well of him, he resigned only under great pressure after thirty-eight years as master. Preston succeeded him, but proved a bitter disappointment to his friends and supporters. He was often absent from the college; he continued to preach regularly at Lincoln's Inne, and he took every opportunity to secure for himself a place at Court. He failed to "make his mark" on the college as had been expected.[2] After six years he withdrew as master on account of ill health to the home of John Dod, where shortly later he died.

Preston has been labelled "a perfect politician,"[3] and it may well be that his early inclination to diplomacy as a vocation might have been pursued with greater profit. While he was probably an effect-

---

1.Dictionary of National Biography, "John Preston."
2.Shuckburgh, E.S., Emmanuel College (Cambridge,1904) p.58.
3.Dictionary of National Biography, "John Preston."

ive preacher, (he too being often invited to the pulpit at St. Mary's) and was acknowledged to be a loyal defender of Calvinism in a day when the established doctrine had become increasingly tainted with Arminian viewpoints, it would seem that he suffered from a too great personal ambition.

Preston's The New Covenant (4th ed. 1630) was one of the first volumes bearing the word "covenant" in its title.[1] It was one of four or five full length books by Preston, all published posthumously through the efforts of Sibbes, John Davenport, Thomas Ball, and Thomas Goodwin, which was devoted to expositions of the covenant. He describes in detail the intracacies of the doctrine of the covenant of grace, and his approach closely follows the strong pietistic and soteriological slant of Sibbes.

John Cotton (1584-1652) is best known for his leadership in the New England colony, but Cotton too belongs to the fellowship of English covenant Puritans, for he served his early ministry there and his books were published and read in England. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge in 1598, though later transferring to Emmanuel, where he was elected a tutor in 1607. It is possible that his move to Emmanuel coincided with his first religious awakening, which was occasioned by the vivid vital preaching of William Perkins. However, it was another sermon, this time by Richard Sibbes, which proved the turning point in Cotton's life. Cotton Mather, some years later, reports this experience:

---

[1] The earliest English volume carrying the word "covenant" in its title appears to be The Covenant Betweene God and Man, purportedly written by John Fotherby and published in 1616. No information is available about the author. The book, apparently written by a Presbyterian, presents a plea for individual and national repentance, advocates the taking of the covenant as the way of reformation, and cites Old Testament experiences as precedents to be followed.

> "The Holy Spirit of God had been at work upon this young heart, by the ministring of that reverend and renowned preacher of righteousness, Mr. Perkins; but he resisted and smothered those convictions through a vain persuasion, that if he became a godly man 'twould spoil him for being a learned one...when he heard the bell toll for the funeral of Mr. Perkins, his mind secretly rejoiced in his deliverance from that powerful ministry by which his conscience had been so oft beleaguered... But he was at length more effectually awakened by a sermon of Dr. Sibs, wherein was discoursed the misery of those who had only a negative righteousness, or a civil, sober, honest, blamelessness before men. Mr. Cotton became now very sensible of his own miserable condition before God...Mr. Cotton's veneration for Dr. Sibs was after this very particular and perpetual."[1]

Cotton, in turn, must have been a persuasive person since he greatly influenced the thinking and views of Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and John Davenport. In 1612 Cotton became vicar of a church in Boston, England, but within a few years his disuse of certain ceremonies resulted in his suspension.

In regard to the idea of covenant, Cotton viewed God's covenant as "the way of life" whereby God agrees to be a God to man and man must look to be God's child.[2] He differentiates the covenant of works from its successor the covenant of grace, though he does not attempt to delineate the historical development and significance of the covenant. He stresses the importance of man's willing response and follows Ames in the advocacy of a church covenant, which for him parallels for the Christian group the individual believer's covenant with God.

When he was in his Boston parish, Cotton, being noted as a student of theology, decided to take a number of pupils in his home. Preston is said to have sent students to him, while others came from Holland and Germany. In 1633 Cotton was cited before the High Commission and upon John Dod's advice "kept himself close."[1] Confronted only with continued persecution for his beliefs Cotton resigned his vicarage in 1633 and sailed to New England on the same book with Hooker. The fact that Cotton continued to exert influence in England is shown not only through the continued publication of his writings in London, but more especially by the urgent invitation extended to him, Hooker and Davenport to participate in the Westminster Assembly. It seems that Cotton would have willingly gone, if the others had too, but Hooker stoutly refused to go.

---

[1] Mather, Cotton, Magnalia Christi Americana (1702) III.1.5. p.15.

[2] Cotton, John, The Way of Life (1641) p.91.

Another who was much admired by Richard Sibbes was John Ball (1585-1640), who received his training at Brasenose College, Oxford (B.A. 1603-4). After serving for a time as tutor in his college, Ball began to express conscientious scruples against certain ceremonies, and was deprived, imprisoned, released and again incarcarated for failing to abide by the ecclesiastical order of the day. He was reputed an "eminent scholar,"[2] and two of his books particularly, The Treatise of Faith (1632), for which Sibbes wrote the introduction, and A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace (1645), express his well-developed covenant views. His writings were popularly received not only in England but also in New England. Ball goes beyond Ames in amplifying a philosophy of history based upon the covenant, although he only seems to have given attention to one covenant. Like Sibbes and Preston Ball's writings are a pean of praise for the great mercy of God in making a covenant of grace with man and an exhortation to men to take advantage of this free offer of salvation.

William Gouge (1578-1683), a graduate and later a fellow

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "John Cotton."
[2] ibid., "John Ball."

(1598-1604) at King's College, Cambridge, was related by marriage to several leading Puritans. His mother was the sister of Ezekiel and Samuel Culverwel, so that he was also the nephew of Laurence Chaderton as well as of William Whitaker, the Cambridge masters who had upheld Perkins against Peter Baro. Gouge was considered a thorough scholar and particularly an able logician. He opposed the "Book of Sports" both in 1618 and in 1633, and along with Sibbes, Thomas Goodwin, John Davenport and eight others was involved in 1626 in the plan for buying up impropriations in order to promote and foster a Puritan ministry.[1] Laud thwarted this scheme by declaring it an "illicit corporation," but these men's convictions of the need for further reformation remained undiminished.

Like Perkins and Greenham Gouge was much concerned with the practical questions of religion. One of his most popular writings was a volume Of Domesticall Duties which carefully delineated the relationships and responsibilities of all persons within the household. Gouge's use of covenant terminology, however, was somewhat limited to its sociological aspects and he has little to say about the theological application of the idea.

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) has already been mentioned in connection with the feoffeement scheme in which he was associated with Sibbes and Gouge among others. Goodwin entered Christ's College in 1613, when as he himself wrote, "the whole town was filled with the discourse of the power of Mr. Perkins' ministry,"[2] though Perkins had passed away ten years before. Goodwin was decidedly influenced by the contemporary preaching and leadership of Richard Sibbes and John Preston. For an undisclosed reason he transferred to St. Catherine Hall in 1619 for his M.A. and became a fellow of that college the following year. In 1626 he helped Sibbes obtain the appointment to the mastership. Upon Preston's death (1628) Goodwin became lecturer at Trinity Church, Cambridge, and it was while in this position that he had occasion to discuss questions of non-conformity with John Cotton and seems to have been led by Cotton to become a non-separating but congregational Puritan. By 1634 he had resigned his lectureship in favor of Sibbes, and following a period of preaching in London, during which time his life was made miserable by Archbishop Laud, he sailed for Holland and became pastor of the English church at Arnheim.[1] Six years later, at the beginning of the Long Parliament, he was back in England and gathered a church about him in London. His relationship to Cotton appears to have been very close; he and Philip Nye published Cotton's Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (1644) and wrote a preface to that work in which they set forth their own views of church government. Cotton urged Goodwin to come to New England (1647), but other friends successfully persuaded him to remain. He was appointed a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and soon was aligned with "the dissenting brethren" of that gathering. In 1650 he accepted the appointment as president of Magdalen College, Oxford, a post he held until his removal in 1660.

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "William Gouge." See also Kirby, E.W., "Lay Feoffes: A Study in Militant Puritanism," Journal of Modern History (1942) XIV.pp.1-25, and Parker, Henry A., "The Feoffees of Importations," Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (1910) XI. pp.263-277.

[2] Goodwin, Thomas, Works (Edinburgh,1861) II. p.xiii.

Goodwin's admiration for and personal friendship with several covenant writers is noted by his activity in publishing their works. In addition to the Cotton treatise already mentioned, Goodwin edited or had a hand in preparing for publication several of Sibbes' writings, Bowels Opened, Excellencie of the Gospel, as well as two books by John Preston, Golden Scepter, Life Eternal, and several volumes by Jeremiah Burroughs. He himself wrote numerous sermons and tracts which have been collected into thirteen volumes. His Covenant of Grace Opened (1649) was his most explicit work on the covenant, although covenant thinking permeates all of his writings. His interpretation of the covenant is primarily a theological one. Although he does not ignore its relevance for society, he centers attention upon the covenant of grace which is made possible for man by virtue of God's covenant with Christ.[1] Goodwin characteristically engages in urging repentance upon some, while warning others not to lose God if the benefits of the covenant are to be experienced.[2] He makes brief reference to the first "knitting to God," that between a Creator and his creatures, but the "whole design of God" is only portrayed by "a second union" in which to make "all sure and fast" God gathers men to him in Christ.[3] The centrality of the role of Christ in this interpretation is noteworthy in comparison to the writings of Perkins or Ames, or even Sibbes. The evangelical spirit throughout, however, is closely akin to that in Sibbes' sermons.

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "Thomas Goodwin."

Another who was deeply indebted to John Cotton was John Davenport (1597-1670), a Magdalen College, Oxford, graduate. For a time he was vicar of St. Stephens Church, Coleman Street in London, and it is surmised that during this period he came in contact with Puritans who were responsible for his actively affirming non-conformist views. John Cotton, more than any one else, is credited with having brought Davenport around to this conviction. Davenport's acquiantance with Sibbes, Goodwin, and Gouge is further verified by his joining them in the feoffeement scheme which Laud opposed.

---

[1] Goodwin, T., Works, I. pp.31 & 455; IV. p.213
[2] ibid., III. p.429
[3] ibid., I. pp.175-6.

In order to escape persecution Davenport in 1633 resigned his vicarage and went to Holland where he became co-pastor with John Paget in Amsterdam. He and Paget, however, could not agree on matters of church discipline or dogma,[1] particularly with regard to the baptism of infants, and within two years Davenport returned to England. His interest was aroused in the Massachusetts charter, and upon Cotton's advice he set sail for New England in 1637. Davenport was particularly associated with the New Haven colony which he founded and to which he devoted the remainder of his life. He enjoyed a "high reputation for industry and earnestness" and was extremely influential in the early developments in New England. Undoubtedly he had a part in the preparation of the volume, Church Government and Covenant Discussed (1643), in which the New England ministers defended their idea of church covenant, although Richard Mather is more generally regarded the author. Davenport's earlier writings growing out of the controversy in Amsterdam and his sermons indicate his early acceptance of the covenant idea.

Henry Scudder (-- 1659), a Christ's College man, was also a Cambridge contemporary of Sibbes. Sibbes wrote a "recommendation" to Scudder's most widely read work, The Christian's Daily Walke (1620), and seems to have been well acquainted with the author. Scudder's writings are primarily of a devotional nature though evidencing well developed covenant views. His amplification of the covenant grew out of his answer to the question of "how to get and keepe true peace with God," and he stresses the blessings which come to those who fulfill the conditions of the covenant, "repenting and beleeving in Christ."[1]

---

[1] Davenport was not the only one to have difficulties with Paget, since Ames, Parker, Peters, and Hooker had each been opposed by him at other times.

A Christ College contemporary of Scudder's was William Whately (1583-1639), who graduated just a year before (1601).[2] Whately left Cambridge with strong Puritan opinions, and after an M.A. at Oxford, took the post of vicar at Banbury. His treatises on marriage[3] dealt with the idea of covenant in the relationship of husband and wife, while various sermons, such as The Nevv Birth (1619), present the covenant of grace as one of the "foure chiefe points of divine truth."

Edward Leigh (1602-1671) was another covenant advocate who graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford.[4] He seems not to have been active as a preacher, though he studied divinity along with law and history at Oxford and later at the Middle Temple. He was a member of Parliament for a term and later a colonel in the Parliamentary army and a delegate to the Westminster Assembly. He was a great admirer of William Whately, and prior to 1640 went to Banbury just to be near Whately whose preaching he esteemed. Jointly with Henry Scudder Leigh edited some of Whately's writings. In his own religious treatises

---

[1] Scudder, Henry, The Christians Daily Walke (1642 ed.) p.456. (The preface, "To the Reader" in this edition was written by John Davenport.)

[2] Dictionary of National Biography, "William Whately."

[3] A Bride-Bush or A Wedding Sermon (London, 1617) and A Care-Cloth: Or A Treatise of the Cumbers and Troubles of Marriage (London, 1624).

[4] It is significant that three prominent covenant preachers were Magdalen College graduates: Harris, 1600; Leigh, 1620; and Davenport, 1625. There is no question of Cambridge being the Puritan center, but the role of this one Oxford college is noteworthy.

Leigh was reputed to "evince little scholarship or acumen" and to produce "mostly compilations."[1] His Treatise of Divine Promises (1633) however, is pregnant for covenant thinking. Four of the five divisions of this volume are devoted to a discussion of the Covenant, "the Bundle and Body of all the Promises." He parallels legal and evangelical promises with the covenant of works and the covenant of grace respectively, and stresses how the sureness of God's promises enables man to have assurance and hope of salvation and happiness. Few works of this period offer as lengthy and detailed a description of God's covenant, and Leigh more clearly than most writers combines God's promises with God's covenant. God's covenant is his promise.

While not known to have been closely connected with the men in the so-called "Sibbes Circle," there were several early seventeenth century Puritans whose writings incorporated the idea of covenant. The most important was Robert Harris (1581-1658), who graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford. Harris' original intention had been to study law, but for reasons which are not apparent he decided to enter the ministry. The next ten years of his life were spent in studying theology, where is not known, and when he secured his B.D. in 1614, he was offered the parish at Hanwell in Oxfordshire, which for some twenty years had been held by John Dod. Harris was a "stout-hearted" Puritan, whose loyalty to non-conformist views led to his being ousted from his Hanwell church by royalist troops in 1642. He then preached in various London churches and in 1648 was appointed president of Trinity College where he remained until his death.[2]

Among Harris' writings, his Treatise of the New Covenant, published 1632, most fully sets forth his views. This treatise, using Ezekiel xi.19 for a text, emphasizes the wonderful goodness of God in entering into a covenant with man, not for himself but only for "our comfort, our safety, our happinesse."[1] In the face of such a revelation of God's love men are urged to make sure that they are in covenant with God. Harris describes how God first made a covenant with Christ, and then "in Christ, it is made with all Christian men and women." He also compares this covenant with the covenants God made of old, including "a covenant of amity, not of reconciliation" which he first made with Adam, and which ended when Adam was not able to fulfill his part, and then leading to the covenants with the Patriarchs and the people of Israel.[2] God is portrayed as "ready" to make a covenant with us in order to establish a mutual peace between himself and man, and the great advantages for man to make this covenant with God are duly enumerated. The whole force of his argument is that it is not enough to have God "in outward profession." A man to be happy must be "in speciall Couenant with God."[3] The questions he answers and the assurances he gives suggest a strong pietistic emphasis upon man's being saved.

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "Edward Leigh."
[2] ibid., "Robert Harris."

Another Puritan whose writings contain much covenant thinking but about whose life practically nothing is known, is Thomas Adams (fl.1612-1653). His sermons, however, were considered worthy to be gathered into three volumes and published in the Nichols series of eminent divines.[4]

---

[1] Harris, Robert, A Treatise of the New Covenant (1632) p.161.
[2] ibid., pp.163-4.
[3] ibid., p.187.
[4] The Works of Thomas Adams. Angus, Joseph, ed. (Edinburgh, 1862).

Other Seventeenth Century Writers

By the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century the idea of a covenant between God and man had become rather widely accepted and written about. The covenant concept was in the air. Not only preachers but lawyers employed covenant terminology, and references to the covenant idea were increasingly common in Parliamentary discussions in connection with the need for the reformation and ordering of both church and state. There is wide variation in the use of the covenant, though there is no evidence that any particular group was more zealous in support of the general idea of covenant than another. Presbyterians, Congregationalists and adherents of newer varieties of Independency all reflected covenant thinking. However, some were more interested in a particular application of the covenant than another. Congregationalists and many Independents zealously supported the church covenant idea. The Independents took leadership in developing the idea of a covenant between the king and the people, while it was Presbyterians who were responsible for furthering the idea of a national covenant.

A number of the men whose writings deal with the covenant served as members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Among them, besides Thomas Goodwin, Scudder, Gouge and Harris, who have already ben mentioned, were Thomas Gataker (1574-1654), Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1649), William Bridge (1600?-1670), Herbert Palmer (1601-1647), John Lightfoot (1602-1675), William Spurstowe (1605?-1666), and John Bond (1612-1676). The connection of these men with Cambridge colleges is worth noting. Gataker and Palmer graduated from St. Johns, and the former was for a time fellow at Sidney Sussex, while the latter was a fellow and later (1644) master of Queens. Lightfoot went to Christ's; Burroughs, Bridge, and Spurstowe were from Emmanuel. Bond came from St. Catherine, and Spurstowe and Lightfoot served successively as masters of St. Catherine's between 1645 and 1675.[1] All of these men presumably were acquainted with Sibbes and Preston who held the mastership of St. Catherine's and Emmanuel respectively when some of them were studying there. While the idea of God's covenant pervades these men's writings, none of them wrote a special volume devoted to the concept.

The impact of Emmanuel not only on Puritan activity but also in contributing to covenant theology is further noted from the writings of John Bastwick (1593-1654), John Brinsley (1600-1615) and Thomas Shepard (1604-1649). St. Johns also continued to produce covenant preachers in the persons of Henry Burton (1578-1648), Daniel Dyke (-- 1614), and Peter Bulkley (1583-1659). Bulkley and Shepard both sailed for New England in 1635, and like Cotton and Hooker their writings were sent back to England for publication. Significantly they are the only ones among this group of men who produced detailed treatments on the covenant, which raises the question of whether the New England environment may not have been largely responsible for their elaboration of the concept.

Daniel Dyke's writings link him to the more spiritual concerns of men like Sibbes, but though the idea of covenant runs through his writings, it never receives special attention. A college contemporary of Gataker, Dyke died quite early, but not before he, like his father before him, had been silenced by the authorities for his efforts at church reformation. Burton's contribution to covenant thought was largely in the area of politics with his special interest centering in a covenant between the people and the king. John Milton (1608-1674), a Christ College graduate, especially in his early treatises on political and ecclesiastical affairs, clearly affirmed the covenant concept. Among these several men the idea of covenant was a familar way of thinking, but no one in this period seemed to feel the need of elaborating upon the idea.

---

[1] These Cambridge affiliations based upon articles in the Dictionary of National Biography, and reference to Athena Cantabrigenses by Cooper, C.H. & Cooper, T. (Cambridge, 1861) vols. 2 & 3, and to Alumni Cantabrigienses (Cambridge, 1922).

The lack of specific treatises on covenant during the 1630s and 1640s does not imply a decline of covenant writing in England. There is no doubt that the intensive covenant writing was being done in New England, but it must also be recalled that this apparent lull was just prior to the appearance of several major works on the covenant written by Richard Baxter, Thomas Blake, and Thomas Boston in the 1650s. Moreover, there was in England an expanding use of the covenant during these years not only in theological discourse but most especially in politics as men's attention became more and more directed to questions of authority and government. A key example is Henry Parker (1604-1652), a graduate of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, who became an Independent after a period of supporting the Presbyterian movement. Parker wrote extensively and advanced the theory of covenant as it relates the king and the people. The covenant had been recognized as the basis of a relationship between God and man, but Parker, along with others like Burton and Milton, applies it more particularly to kings and subjects.

While these various covenant writers may have differed in their opinions as to ecclesiastical or political polity and to the relation between state and church, theologically they were considered to be in agreement. By the 1630s, however, deviations from the accepted theology had become openly advocated and more pronounced, especially among some of the established church leaders who espoused Arminian views. Even some outside the hierarchy were accused of Arminianism, and two of the more prominent to be so labelled also gave some recognition to the covenant idea -- John Saltmarsh (? -1647) and John Goodwin (c1594-1665). Saltmarsh studied at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and during his early ministry advocated conformity and loyally supported episcopacy. In 1640 he willingly took the "etcetera" oath, but sometime in the next three years he must have accepted the Presbyterian view, for he subscribed to the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643 and wrote a pamphlet eulogizing it. He published numerous short treatises, both of a devotional and controversial nature, which led Thomas Gataker to accuse him of Arminian views.[1]

John Goodwin graduated from Queen's College, Cambridge and continued there for a time as a fellow. He succeeded Davenport as vicar of St. Stephens, Coleman Street, London, a position from which he was ejected after twelve years by Parliament in 1645 as a result of his attacks upon Presbyterianism. This led him to establish his own congregation, and to throw in his lot with the army and against Parliament. He wrote numerous tracts, many of them polemical in character, for he engaged in heated discussions against Presbyterianism.[2] While the idea of God's covenant is evidently quite familar to him, he wrote relatively little about it. Actually neither Saltmarsh or Goodwin seemed interested in doing more than recognizing the idea of covenant. Neither may be said to have advanced it in a central way.

---

[1] Dictionary of National Biography, "John Saltmarsh."

[2] ibid., "John Goodwin."

Antinomianism was one of the pitfalls against which Calvin and Calvinists warned their readers. It is not altogether surprising that zealous believers in the doctrine of the covenant of grace might succumb to antinomian views. The most ardent covenant advocate who was thus accused was Tobias Crisp (1600-1643). Crisp took his B.A. at Christ's College, Cambridge, but transferred to Baliol College in Oxford for his M.A. During his early ministry he is said to have exhibited Arminian tendencies, and then later to have advanced antinomian views.[1] His doctrine of free grace, which he so stoutly proclaimed in his posthumously published volume, Christ Alone Exalted (1645), was bitterly attacked by some of his contemporaries, and the Westminster Assembly even proposed to burn the first volume of his collected works as heretical.[2] Crisp's friends attempted to reassure his opponents, and Robert Lancaster in the preface to Christ Alone Exalted explicitly denies the charges of "Antinomianism" and "Libertinism" levelled at Crisp. However, this attempt to absolve Crisp from such odious titles seems not altogether justified by the contents of Crisp's book which leaves a decided antinomian impression.

For all of this Crisp was a firm believer in the idea of covenant. In fact, he wrote more voluminously on covenant than most of his contemporaries. His whole concern, painstakingly detailed in two volumes of some six hundred pages each, is to extoll "the better covenant" which God has freely made in Christ. Had not God given Christ for a covenant to his people and all their sins charged upon Christ? Christ's role by which he "doth compass the great businesse of the Father upon earth" is central in this interpretation. Crisp discusses both particular and general covenants between God and man, and differentiates the covenant of works and the covenant of grace as God's old and new general covenant with men. He makes clear in repeated passages that God "doth every thing in the covenant," and he devotes pages to explaining how the covenant of grace can have no conditions which man must fulfill in order to make it effective or to keep it.[1] In itself this was no more than others had asserted, but Crisp left no room for consequent action by man to exercise his faith and fulfill God's law. For Crisp the Christian life centered in a life of faith, and not a life of faith and obedience as was more generally taught. In some respects Crisp's interpretation may be regarded as an extreme version of the emphasis placed by Sibbes, Preston, T. Goodwin and others upon the goodness of God to make a covenant with men and the wonder of God's all-sufficient free grace.

---

[1] Neal, Daniel, The History of the Puritans (London, 1732-38) III. p.18
[2] Dictionary of National Biography, "Tobias Crisp."

Summary.

The whole of this discussion of the expression of covenant ideas in England fails to reveal the existence of an organized covenant group. That close fellowship and numerous personal and spiritual ties bound covenant preachers together cannot be denied. But the influence behind the advocacy of the covenant by these men and not by others is obscure. This conclusion is especially highlighted by noting the absence of covenant thinking among some men who by training and connections might be expected to espouse the idea. Certainly one conspicuous example is Paul Baynes (-- 1617), a contemporary of Perkins and a teacher of Ames. He was educated at Christ's College where he later served for many years as a fellow, and upon Perkins' death (1602) succeeded him in the lectureship of St. Andrew's Church, Cambridge. All Baynes' writings were published posthumously and Ames and Sibbes wrote prefaces to several works. Sibbes, who owed his conversion to Baynes, referred to Baynes succeeding Perkins as one who "succeeds him in opinion, whom he succeeded in place."[1] It is surprising, therefore, that a person so close to Perkins, Ames, and Sibbes, and held in high esteem by them seems to have given no place to the idea of covenant.

---

[1] Crisp, Tobias, Christ Alone Exalted (1643) I. p.163.

Among other prominent Puritans who do not actively subscribe to the covenant interpretation of Christian doctrine were William Whitaker (1548-1595), a graduate and fellow of Trinity College and later master at St. Johns, who was reputed an ardent Calvinist; Richard Rogers (1550?-1618), a Christ's College graduate, best known for his devotional writings, and as an adherent of Cartwright's ecclesiastical point of view was in trouble with the authorities repeatedly for his beliefs; Samuel Ward (1577-1639), of St. John's College, who served as fellow at Emmanuel before becoming a fellow and then master of Sidney Sussex College; William Twisse (1578?-1646), who reacting from the ecclesiastical viewpoint of his uncle, Thomas Bilson, became a "vigorous Puritan of the presbyterian sort," and an "erudite student", but who refused a chair in theology at Franeker proferred while Ames was still at the University.[2]

---

[1] Introduction by Richard Sibbes to Baynes, Paul, Exposition to the First Chapter of Ephesians, quoted in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes (Edinburgh, 1862) I. p.lxxxv.

[2] This biographical data is based on pertinent articles in the Dictionary of National Biography.

Such a list could be added to but these names suffice to illustrate that not all prominent Puritans were pronounced advocates of the covenant idea. When one looks for the common elements among covenant theologians, the impetus of Cambridge, however, cannot be overlooked. Cambridge was a center of non-conformity, and in James' reign was described as "a nest of Puritans."[1] Of it Ames could say with enthusiasm, it is "the place of light...which is or should be as an eye to all our land."[2] Here men "agreeing in one spirit" studied, taught, entered into friendly discussions and labored with one another in their effort to reveal "Gods arme unto salvation."

Not simply Cambridge, but more particularly two Cambridge colleges, Christ's and Emmanuel, were alma mater to the majority of chief covenant writers. Christ's, whose historian doubts "whether any other college contained so many residents who were in trouble for Puritanism or for non-conformity,"[3] was attended by Chaderton, Perkins, Ames, Taylor, Johnson, George Downame, John Smyth, Thomas Goodwin, Scudder, Crisp, and Lightfoot. Emmanuel College, founded in 1584 to develop "the godliness of the people" and "a nearer approach to primitive Christianity,"[4] trained Culverwel, Hooker, Robinson, Preston, Cotton, Shepard, Bastwick, Brinsley, Burroughs, Bridge, and Spurstowe. When to these names are added Cartwright, Sibbes, Bulkley, Burton, Playfere, Dyke and Gataker of St. Johns, Gouge of Kings, Dod of Jesus, Robert Browne and Harrison of Corpus Christi, John Goodwin of Queens, Peters of Trinity, Barrow of Clare, Saltmarsh of Magdalene, and Greenham of Pembroke, Cambridge is seen to be not only the cradle of Puritanism but also of covenant theology.[1]

---

[1] Cf. Bronkema, Ralph, The Essence of Puritanism (Goes, Holland, 1929) p.154.
[2] Ames, W. in his preface to Baynes, P., The Diocesan Tryall (1621).
[3] Peile, op. cit., p.69.
[4] Shuckburgh, E.S., op. cit., p.18.

In brief, the height of covenant thinking in England prior to 1644 came in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Its beginnings can be traced back to the last two decades of the preceeding century, especially in the writings of Greenham, Cartwright, Browne and Perkins. The theological treatises of Ames and the sermons of Sibbes, Preston, and Thomas Goodwin, along with those of Cotton, Bulkley, Ball, Davenport, Hooker, Harris, and Leigh - to name the more prominent - developed the covenant idea as a central theme of Christian living: God to be our God and we to be his people. It is in this first quarter of the seventeenth century that the idea of two covenants was developed in detail and a covenant between God and Christ introduced and explained. Not only a mere outline but most details of covenant thinking make their appearance in these years. For the next twenty years, roughly from 1625 to 1644, no major writings devoted to the covenant were written. The idea may have become more widely accepted, but it followed the pattern already suggested by earlier seventeenth century writers.

Therefore, the span of years covered by this study does not really portray a development in covenant thought in the sense of a marked growth of the idea throughout the period. Essentially the views set forth by the early writers, Greenham, Browne, and Perkins describe the basic covenant idea, though later writers like Ames, Sibbes, and T. Goodwin may have stressed certain aspects and discussed others in greater detail. This lack of a precise development is even more true in respect to social covenants. Certainly Greenham, Browne and Perkins presented a fuller treatment of covenants and society than many of the later covenant preachers. This fact raises the question of the relation between the application of the covenant to theology as compared to its application to society. Presumably the covenant was first of all social, for Greenham implies a prior acquaintance of social covenant on the part of his readers and uses the social covenant to illustrate God's covenant with man.[1] Quite probably covenants between men were one factor which gave rise to the idea of the theological covenant. But surely the acceptance of the sacraments as seals of God's covenant, a view affirmed by many sixteenth century reformers both in England and on the continent, and a careful reading of the Bible in which the Old Testament was held to be of equal value as the New, were two of the additional factors encouraging covenant preaching.

---

[1] In contrast only six men mentioned in this chapter were Oxford graduates: Parker, Jacob, Ball, Harris, Davenport, and Leigh, and only the last four actively developed the idea of covenant.

This chapter and the preceeding one offer biographical background for an understanding of the covenant idea. It is time now to inquire more fully into what this idea of covenant was and how it was adapted by these men to answer practical questions of individual and group living. These men had fastened upon a most suggestive concept which seemed to provide an acceptable description of man's relationship to God as well as to his fellows. In some ways the covenant introduced a new equation into man's various relationships which resulted in religious and political repersussions in the years ahead. In other ways, the covenant idea simply did not fit into the theological and social framework of the day, and therefore had to be re-interpreted to be used. The following chapters seek to probe into the use these English Puritans made of the covenant and the significance of the idea for religious and social life and thought.

One might say somewhat past time –

---

[1] Greenham, Works, p.589.

THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

III. The Covenant in Theology

IV. Some Implications of the Theological Covenant

Chapter III.

THE COVENANT IN THEOLOGY

That the idea of covenant is found particularly in Reformed church circles was indicated in the first chapter. It was in countries where Calvinism spread that the idea of covenant was applied to theology and England was no exception. For the covenant did illuminate some aspects of that theology, and especially to describe the puzzling relationship between God and man. And yet, as will become apparent, the covenant really did not explain that relationship. In some ways this was an idea which portrayed the very heart of doctrine in a vivid and understandable manner, and in other ways it simply didn't fit. For example, the notion of mutuality inherent in a covenant hardly seemed applicable to divine-human relations in view of God's primacy and superiority. The problem of these Puritan advocates of covenant was that they had come upon an idea which seemed full of possibilities for explaining questions of Christian faith and life, and yet which wasn't altogether adaptable to the works of God in respect to men. How and to what extent they did apply the covenant to theology will be presented in this chapter, while the next chapter will be devoted to an appraisal of their efforts and an attempt to characterize some of the implications of this covenant between God and man.

The basic assumption and starting point of the theology into which the covenant idea was introduced was the sovereignty of God and the misery of man. A great gulf existed between divine majesty and human sinfulness. The role that covenant played in theology was to bridge this great gulf.

The covenant Puritans, like Calvin, emphasize the supreme majesty, justice and mercy of God. What God is in his nature no man is able to discern. He is infinite and incomprehensible, and yet he is revealed by "his properties and by his works."[1] Inscrutable as the being of God is, he has revealed himself sufficiently for men's needs and to show that all things necessary to living well flow from him.[2]

What God does, therefore, is more important than what God in his essence is. His actions toward men are summed up in the doctrines of creation and providence. All creatures owe their existence to God, not only because they are his creations, but because they are governed by the same power which created them.[3]

> "God did not onely make heauen and earth, and so leaue them, as Masons and Carpenters leaue houses when they are built: but by his prouidence doth most wisely gouerne the same...hee ordereth all things and directeth them to good ends."[4]

All things are under the government of God, and therefore all things are for God's purpose. "There is not the least thing in nature, but it commeth to passe by the decree and will of God."[5]

God's government is either general and ordinary or special and extraordinary. General providence extends "to the whole world, and all things indifferently;" special providence "is that, which God sheweth and exerciseth towards his Church and chosen people."[6]

By his special providence God has from the beginning differentiated among men, electing to manifest his grace in some, while leaving others in misery and damnation "that the glory of Gods Justice might be manifested in them."[1] He loves some; others he hates. Some he has mercy upon and some he hardens.[2] All mankind is, therefore, divided into two groups, either elect or reprobate, good or bad, sheep or goats, within covenant or without covenant; "there is no middle sort of men in the world."[3] Men should neither blame God nor protest against such a seemingly arbitrary and inexplicable division.[4]

---

[1] Ball, John, A Short Treatise (1637) p.51. Cf. Perkins, Wm., Works, (1633) I. p.130.

[2] Ames, William, Marrow of Sacred Divinity (1643) pp.9,19.

[3] ibid., pp.32,42.

[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.157

[5] ibid., I. p.112.

[6] ibid., I. p.160.

> "Though God should elect some to salvation, and reiect some others, and that upon his will, yet were there no iniustice with God...God hath absolute power or freedome of will, whereby without being bound to any creature, he may and can first of all haue mercie on whom he will, and secondly, harden whome he will."[5]

God is no unjust tyrant seeking to destroy man. His will is justice itself,[6] and his great justice and mercy are exhibited in his very decree of predestination.[7] God, these men remind us, is indebted to none and that he saves any man is a sign of his graciousness.[8] Being "most free" to decree and accomplish whatsoever he will, God might have chosen none, and for that he could not have been criticized since man only deserved "hell and damnation."[9] Moreover, no benefit appertains to God for choosing any. Yet he showed his mercy by electing some, and once chosen a man can never wholly fall away from God's favor.[10] Despite man's weakness and corruption God's election is from eternity and unchangeable. "The Elect shall not misse of Salvation, nor the wicked of damnation, because the Lord will not lose his glory of mercy and justice."[11]

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.108
[2] Preston, John, Life Eternall (1632) p.96.
[3] Preston, John, The Nevv Covenant (1630) p.507.
[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.96
[5] ibid., I. p.286.
[6] ibid., III. p.516.
[7] ibid., I. p.96
[8] ibid., I. p.16.
[9] Sibbes, R., Saints Cordiall (1637) p.26; also Ames, op. cit., pp.23,27.
[10] Perkins, op. cit., I. pp.137-8; also Sibbes, Works, II. p.49.
[11] Taylor, Thomas, Works, (London, 1653) p.139.

Man, on the other hand, is by nature a creature of utter misery, "a vassall of sinne and a bond slaue of Satan," "a firebrand of hell,"[1] "a poore worme vpon earth,"[2] in whom the devil reigns. He is "full of all unrighteousnesse, all impiety."[3] All men, whether they are aware of it or not, are "deadly sick" and stand under the curse of God.[4] They are "crooked inwardly and outwardly, in will and in judgment,"[5] and "void of all goodness."[6] Not only can they do nothing good, but they are rebels who oppose all goodness.

This was not always man's plight. The nature which he received from God at creation must be carefully distinguished from the corruption of that nature as a result of Adam's sin. Originally God created man "marvellous, holy and happy."[7] But the first man sinned and rebelled against God, and in his sin is the sin of all men. He sinned actually, yet all his posterity sin "by relation and imputation." Spiritual death involving "the losse of grace and originall Justice" is their punishment.[8] Man's powers thereby are corrupted "not of some, or in part, but of all and wholly."[9] Since Adam no natural man has been able to obey God, or to live well to God. No mere living "civilly" and without any "open wrong" will return him to God's favor. He can do no good works, not even the least good thing, to change his miserable situation. Man's will is still free, but it is "captive and servile" as far as having the power to "will well."[10] Being a rebel,

---

1. Perkins, op. cit., I. p.453; Cf. Sibbes, Works, I.p.414. Ball, op. cit., p.67.
2. Playfere, Ten Sermons (1610) I.17.
3. Preston, J. Saints Qualification (1634) p.4
4. Perkins, op. cit., I. p.220.
5. Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.26.
6. ibid., V. p.39
7. Ball, op. cit., p.61. Cf. Taylor, op. cit., p.165.
8. Ames, op. cit., p.56
9. Perkins, op. cit., III. p.415
10. Ames, op. cit., p.59.

he can in no wise please God, so God and man have become completely estranged.

And for his tragic predicament man has only himself to blame. The devil may be regarded the outward cause of Adam's sin, but the inward cause was man's abuse of his will.[1] Man's inability to do good springs from this original sin; he is separated from God and from all good and cannot even "see or perceive" the things of God, let alone "will or desire" them.[2]

God's Covenant

Man, devoid of goodness and wretched in sin, thus stands in striking contrast to the righteousness and power of God. Between God and man there exists an "infinite disparity,"[3] which only God is able to remedy. Out of his free goodwill God determined to restore man by "lifting him up from an estate of sinne and death, into an estate of grace and life."[4] His "greatest justice and greatest mercy" is manifested in his establishing a new way to bring man to happiness through a covenant in Christ. This covenant is "nothing else but a compact made betweene God and man touching reconciliation and life euerlasting by Christ."[5]

God and man are in such opposite terms that no reconciliation or covenant was possible between them except through a mediator. The infinite goodness of God could only be brought again into relationship with the impurity and corruption of man through "a middle person," the

---

[1] Cf. Ames, op. cit., p.50 and Perkins, op. cit., I. pp.162-3.

[2] Ball, John, A Treatise of Faith (1637) p.11; Bulkeley, Peter, The Gospel-Covenant (1646) p.163.

[3] Ball, John, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace (1645) p.5.

[4] Ames, op. cit., p.69

[5] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.167.

God-man.[1] Outside of Christ, God is "a consuming fire."[2] But God became man that man might be one with God. Thus in man's extremity God's mercy opened a new way to bring him back again to God. God becomes our God in a covenant through the Mediator, Jesus Christ.[3]

Though God was thus "pleased to condescend to man's weaknesse,"[4] yet in so doing he did not abrogate his justice. Of his own absolute power God cannot pardon sin without satisfaction, since justice demands that God either punish evil-doers or receive restitution for their sins. Christ, being both God and man, by his perfect obedience to God's laws made full satisfaction for the sins of those whom God had given him to be saved, and so laid the groundwork for reconciliation between God and man. This reconciliation, therefore, involves no change in God's love or justice, though it does require the alteration of man's state.

Except for the work of Christ the covenant could not be established. His office was "to procure love and agreement between God and man,"[5] and so he is called "the foundation and ground work" of the covenant.[6] Thus man's salvation comes through Christ, who took man's nature and yet who completely satisfied God.[7]

It is significant that for some Puritan covenant preachers this work of redemption was made possible by a "speciall covenant" which God made with Christ. William Ames quotes Isaiah liii.10 to prove the existence of this covenant[8] and describes it as an agreement

---

[1] Sibbes, op. cit., IV. p.212. Cf. Ball, Treatise of Covenant, pp.11,16-17.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.521.
[3] Ball, A Friendly Triall of Grounds Tending to Separation.. (1640) p.283. Cf. Goodwin, Works, I. p.76.
[4] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.7.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.482. Also I. p.5 & VII. p.91.
[6] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.167. Cf. Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.72.
[7] Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, p.391.
[8] "...when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand."

> "that if Christ would make himselfe a sacrifice for sin, then he should see his seed, he should prolong his dayes, and the delight of the Lord should prosper by him."[1]

One preacher, Thomas Goodwin, even pictures Christ bargaining with God as to how many should be saved through his obedience and death. God first stipulated a few, but Christ demurring, God consented to increase the number.[2]

Christ is called to his office of mediator by this special covenant. According to the terms of his covenant with God, Christ did not die for all men, but only for those whom God has elected and given him.[3] Through Christ God has opened a way for man to be related to him by a covenant of grace.

Why the Covenant?

Why should God seek to enter into a covenant with man? There is no reason, says Ball, except "the meere grace and rich mercy and love of God."[4] Certainly there is nothing in man, neither any worth or merit, nor yet man's misery which moved God to make a covenant with him.[5] God offers this covenant simply as an expression of his "unchangeable grace and love." It is not necessary that God reveal a reason for his election and covenant.[6] It is enough

> "that he is willing to enter into Couenant with mortall men...that the glorious God of Heauen and earth should be willing to enter into Couenant, that he should be willing to indent with vs, as it were, that he should be willing to make himselfe a debtor to our selues, hee is in heauen, and we are on earth; hee is the glorious GOD, we dust and ashes; he the Creator, and we but creatures; and yet he is willing to enter into Couenant, which implies a kinde of

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.74

[2] Goodwin, T., Works, IV. p.213 (based upon Isaiah xlix.)

[3] Sibbes, Works, V. p.388; Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.249, 324; Bulkeley, op. cit., p.226.

[4] Ball, op. cit., p.199. Also Treatise of Faith, p.280.

[5] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.4,16,199-200; Ames, op. cit.,p69.

[6] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.350.

> equality between vs...This should teach vs to magnify the mercie of GOD..."[1]

It is called a covenant of mercy because it is established by God's "infinite and boundlesse love to man."

Yet it was inevitable that these Puritan preachers should attempt to amplify and explain this doctrine further. Being human they could not avoid proposing various reasons for God's action. For example, Ball proposes that God intended by the covenant to show his "just and dreadfull indignation against Satan," who had traduced man.[2] Or again Ball suggests that God "suffered" Adam to fall in order that "he might manifest the riches of his mercy in man's recovery." He pictures God "looking upon the Chaos which sinne had brought" and deciding "out of his infinite and boundlesse love to man" to "give forth this gratious and free Covenant."[3] God, in other words, took the occasion of man's misery to manifest his mercy.

Bulkeley proposes that God made a covenant because he wanted "to bind his people the faster to himself," and "for the stronger consolation of his people."[4] God wants "to make us an happy and blessed people,"[5] and so chose to deal with men by covenant that they might know what to expect from their Creator and what God expected of them. The covenant is therefore given for man's comfort. Primarily, it reveals God's good will towards man.[6] It affirms God's justice, but more important, it manifests his great mercy. In this covenant God is all love and mercy.[7] His justice gives place to his mercy,[8] which is of great comfort to man.

---

[1] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.331.
[2] Ball, op. cit., p.17
[3] ibid., pp.17,200.
[4] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.27
[5] ibid., p.131.
[6] Preston, op. cit., p.438.
[7] Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.508.
[8] Perkins, op. cit., II. p.299.

But more significant than these reasons was the feeling that God instituted the covenant because "such manner of dealing suites best with the nature of the reasonable creature, and his subordination to the Almighty."[1] Despite his corruption man still has the faculty of understanding and the covenant is a way which appeals to intelligent beings.[2] It is God's "speciall and proper way of governing reasonable Creatures."[3] God might have employed other means, but he chose this way of covenant as most congenial to man. The idea of an agreement, "the way of stipulation and promise," is considered rational and therefore most applicable to reasonable creatures. God in setting forth his way of salvation by covenant has taken into consideration the nature of man. At heart the idea of covenant appeals to and recognizes man's powers of reason. It gives acknowledgement to man's most distinctive characteristic, his ability to reason. The inference is that God would not have instituted the covenant if he had to deal with any other than rational creatures.

What is the Covenant?

In his discussion of the term "covenant," John Ball points out that sometimes the word signifies "a thing which two choose, and of which they mutually agree and promise betwixt themselves," and sometimes it is used "when one alone doth promise," in which case it takes on a "testimentary disposition."[4] In the Scriptures, Ball finds both uses of the term; there the covenant "sometimes signifie an absolute Promise of God, without any stipulation at all," and sometimes "it is plainly signified a free Promise of God, but stipulation of duty from the reasonable creature."[1] The religious covenant may then either be a promise of God, or "more strictly and properly" an agreement between God and man in which God makes a promise and man is also bound to perform some duty. This latter view of a "promise and stipulation," according to Ball, rightly constitutes a covenant — "when two persons upon these two parts concurre, it is that we call a Covenant properly."[2] There is both a party promising and a party answering in the covenant. There is a "double bond,"[3] involving an engagement on the part of both parties.

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.6

[2] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.317; Ball, op. cit., p.3; Ames, op. cit., p.44.

[3] Ames, op. cit., p.45; Ball, op. cit., p.347; Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.383 and VI. p.542.

[4] Ball, op. cit., pp.1-2.

> "For this Covenant is as it were a certaine transaction of God with the Creature, whereby God commandeth, promiseth, threatneth, fulfilleth, and the Creature doth tye it selfe in obedience to God thus covenanting. Deut. 26: 16-19..."[4]

Ball offers a fuller description:

> "The Covenant in generall may be described a mutual compact or agreement betwixt God and man, whereby God promiseth all good things, especially eternall happinesse unto man, upon just, equall, and favorable conditions, and man doth promise to walke before God in all acceptable, free, and willing obedience, expecting all good from God, and happinesse in God, according to his Promise, for the praise and glory of his great Name."[5]

The covenant unites two parties, God and man, which were at enmity so that they enter into a relation of friendship again. In his covenant God makes certain promises (i.e. forgiveness of sins, life everlasting, etc.) and demands of man certain obligations.

Religion being defined as "binding the whole man to the whole Law of God," knowledge of the covenant is considered one of the fundamental points in religion.[1] In covenant God will be our God. He becomes our Father and we become his sons.[2] Man's happiness which rests in communion with God is only possible in this covenant which God has offered.[3] Not merely the understanding of the covenant but the entering in and abiding by it is crucial to man's welfare and destiny.

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.3
[2] ibid., p.4. Cf. Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.482.
[3] Greenham, Works, p.589.
[4] Ames, op. cit., p.45
[5] Ball, op. cit., p.7.

Kinds of Covenant.

That a covenant has ever been God's way of dealing with men is proved by God having made a covenant with the first man upon his creation. When Adam was unable to keep that covenant, God in his mercy established a second one on a different basis. These two historical covenants, the Covenant of Nature, or the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace must always be kept separated. Both are God's covenants, yet they illustrate contrasting ways by which God governs and redeems man. The covenant of works rests upon man for its fulfillment; the covenant of grace is more hopeful and more perfect,[4] because it rests upon God.

Several covenant writers took great pains to analyse these two covenants and set forth their likenesses and differences. Greenham, Perkins, Ames, Ball, Preston, and Sibbes all to a greater or lesser degree follow essentially the same pattern in taking advantage of this opportunity to discuss the relation of nature and grace, faith and works, and to contrast the superiority of the gospel with the rigors of law.

The covenant of works originated with creation when God covenanted with Adam that he would be his God on condition of perfect obedience on Adam's part.[1] By this agreement should Adam faithfully fulfill the covenant he would have eternal life, while "euerlasting death" would result from his disobedience. "Doe this, and thou shalt live" is commanded, thus setting works as the condition of the covenant, and implying both a promise and a threat.[2] On condition that the commandments will be obeyed, God promises "I will be thy God," and "if you doe it not," he threatens, "thou shall dye the death." This was, says Ball, "a Covenant of friendship,"[3] which when once broken could not be repaired; "it promised no mercy or pardon, admitted no repentance, accepted no obedience, but what was perfect and compleat." But Adam broke this covenant, and "standing for all mankind" subjected all posterity to its threat and curse. Since Adam's fall this covenant has been of no effect, for God could never make a covenant of works demanding righteousness with a fallen creature.[4] There is nothing in man now to enable him to enter into such a covenant.

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., III. p.96. Also Taylor, Works, p. 9, and Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.270.

[2] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.452. Cf. VI. p.19.

[3] ibid., VII. p.71

[4] Perkins, op. cit., II. p.299.

Upon the abrogation of this first covenant, man having plunged himself into misery, God, out of his "rich grace and abundant free mercy," instituted the Covenant of Grace. In the new covenant "all beginning, growth, and ending is from grace, and nothing but grace,"[5] hence its name. Not only are God's promises of grace but man's part is of grace too. This covenant rests upon the admonition, "Believe and thou shalt be saved." Not obedience to the law but faith in Christ becomes its condition. In it God promises "I will put my Law in your minde, and write it in your inward parts."[6] It is a covenant of life, salvation, and peace.[1] It is a "covenant of reconciliation,"[2] being "a mutual compact made betwixt God and man; God in mercy promising and man in duty binding himself unto the Lord."[3]

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.31.
[2] Ames, op. cit., p. 48; Ball, op. cit., p.9.
[3] Ball, op. cit., p.11; Ames, op. cit., p.101.
[4] Ball, op. cit., p.93.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., II. p.10. Cf. Ball, op. cit., p.17.
[6] Preston, Saints Qualification, p.325.

The covenant of works and the covenant of grace were often further distinguished by a methodical comparison of the details and characteristics of each. According to Ames, the new covenant differs from the first[4]

1. In kind: for the old was "as it were a covenant of friendship betweene creator and the creature: but this is a covenant of reconciliation between enemies." That first was "in nature by creation;" the second "above nature."[5]

2. In the efficient:

> "for in that there was an agreement of two parties, namely God and man; but in this God onely doth covenant. For man being now dead in sinne, had no ability to contract a spiritual covenant with God."[6]

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.101.
[2] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.113; Ball, op. cit., p.16 (based upon II Cor. v.19).
[3] Ball, op. cit., p.29.
[4] Ames, op. cit., pp.101-3. For other comparisons of these covenants see Ball, op. cit., pp.24-27 and Bulkeley, op. cit., pp.52-100.
[5] Perkins, op. cit., II. p.299.
[6] Ames in this statement seems to contradict Ball's emphasis upon the condition of the covenant being mutual concurrence of two parties. Ball would not exclude conditions from the covenant of grace any more than any other covenant. (Ball, op. cit., p.17) This covenant requires "free,ready and willing obedience" (p.6) from man, and since obedience is "the effect of faith," (pp.19,29), faith is the condition of the covenant for man. But, and this is of great importance, for Ball, faith "is the instrument of the soule wrought therein by the Holy Ghost, and is the free gift of God." (p.19). It is God who gives grace to perform the condition of the covenant, (p.243) and without God's grace the duty God requires cannot be performed. (p.246). Therefore, the difference between Ball and Ames is essentially one of semantics and interpretation. Ball trying to apply covenant to God's way of salvation stresses man's part. But actually, just as Ames asserts, only God covenants, for even Ball admits that not only does God bind himself to man in covenant, but he also binds man to himself. (p.348).

3. In the object: "for that is extended to all men, but this belongs to some certaine ones in a special manner..to whom it was intended by God."

4. In the moving cause: "for there God according to his soveraingty did worke out of his wise and just counsell; but here mercy only hath place." Relatively speaking, the covenant of works glorifies God's justice, while the covenant of grace glorifies his mercy.[1]

5. In the foundation: "which inthe former was the ability of man himselfe, but in this, Christ Jesus."

6. In the matter promised:

> "For in that God promised life only; but in this he promiseth righteousnesse also, and all the means of life: because to man being dead, not the continuance or perfection of life, but restoring was necessary."[2]

7. In the condition:

> "For that required perfect obedience of workes, which was also to be performed by man of his own strength... but this requires not any condition properly so called, or going before, but only following after or coming betweene, and that to be communicated by grace."[3]

8. In the effects: "for that teacheth and sheweth what is righteous, but this bestowes righteousnesse it selfe, in that there was a dead letter...but in this a quickening spirit."

9. In the adjunct of continuance:

> "for that is antiquated in respect of those who are partakers of this new: but this is everlasting both in respect of the countenance it hath in it selfe, because it admits no end, or change, touching the substance, and

---

[1] Cf. Bulkeley, op. cit., p.75.

[2] See also Ball, op. cit., p.25.

[3] Compare with #2 on previous page and accompanying note. Here Ames accepts the idea of a condition to the covenant as far as theological doctrine will let him. Basically his view is the same as Ball's and Bulkeley's, although the latter two would begin by stating that the covenant has conditions and then proceed to qualify that statement. (Cf. Bulkeley, op. cit., pp325,335;287.

> also in respect of those to whom it is communicated, because the grace of this covenant doth continue for ever with them, who are once truly in covenant."

The first covenant, continues Ames, "never brought salvation to any man" but only brought death; the new covenant "brings assured salvation to all those of whom it is received."

And there are certain similarities in these covenants. Both have the same author, and the parties contracting in each are the same.[1] The subjects of these covenants are common, the giving of the Law and the revealing of the Gospel, and the end is alike, namely, "the blessedness of man and the glory of God." In addition, both require essentially the same duty and promise a like reward. It is in the means of attainment that they differ. To love the Lord with all our hearts is the requirement in the covenant of grace as well as of works, although in the new covenant it is not to be interpreted in such rigorous terms, but "must bee taken...proportionable to grace received."[2] Both covenants promise life, but as already noted, "The Law promiseth life but to the worker for his works or open condition of obedience; The Gospel offers and gives life freely without the condition of any workes and requires nothing but the receiving of that which is offered."[3] The one promised "earthly Paradise" in Adam on condition of persistent obedience; the other promises "heavenly Paradise" to those who are "in Christ by faith and a new creature."[4]

No person can be under both these covenants at one and the same time, since they are fundamentally "opposite" to each other. "He that is under grace, cannot at the same time be under the Law."[5]

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., pp.9,16,24.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.58.
[3] Perkins, op. cit., p.244. (v.II)
[4] Taylor, op. cit., p.167.
[5] Ball, op. cit., p.15.

However, after Adam broke the first covenant, the only covenant really available to man is the covenant of grace. The covenant of works might still be said to stand, but no man can fulfill it. He who is "not saved by the Covenant of Grace, must and shall perish everlastingly."[1]

Actually if a man is not in covenant with God through the covenant if grace, he is considered in covenant with Satan. Besides God's two covenants of salvation, there is also a sinful covenant with the devil in which men partake as "children of wrath by nature." Whoever lives in sin is in bondage to the devil, "if not openly and expressively, at least secretly and implyedly."[2] As covenants served to define all of man's relationships, in the strict dichotomy of good and evil every man not in covenant with God must be in covenant with Satan. Either a man belongs to God or to Satan; he is ruled by one of the other.[3] Strictly speaking, therefore, man is never out of covenant. His misery does not arise because he is not in covenant, but because he is not in covenant with God. There is no special promise of new life in the very act of covenanting; the important question is who are the parties to the agreement. Logically speaking, he who is not in covenant with God is in covenant with the devil and so is God's enemy.[1] A man is either a son of God or a slave of Satan. If he be not subject to and under the government of a gracious God, he is subject to and under a cruel and wicked Satan.[2]

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.23. These two covenants, works and grace, must not be confused with a distinction also made between Old and New Testaments or covenants. The fall, not the two sections of the Scriptures, marks the division between the two covenants. The Old and New Testaments fundamentally refer to one covenant, though it may differ in degrees. (cf. Ball, op. cit., pp.94-5) The major difficulty in such an interpretation was how to explain the law as revealed by Moses "430 yeares" after the first revelation of the covenant of grace with Adam and Eve. Ball clearly calls Moses' covenant a covenant of grace with the law being added because "men had forgotten what was sinne." (p.101,111. "Moses would never have exhorted the people by oath to bind themselves unto the Lord in a Covenant of works," p.107) These Puritans never interpreted the law and gospel as mutually exclusive. "The Law was never given without the Gospel, neither is the Gospel now without the Law." (p.102) (cf. Bulkeley, op. cit., pp.52,53,55.)

[2] Ames, op. cit., p.242. Also Perkins, op. cit., I. p.39.

[3] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.507; Sibbes, op. cit., IV. p.217 & V. p. 320; VII. p.389; Burton, Englands Bondage and Hope of Deliverance (1641) p.20.

Any who think it impossible for a covenant to be made between man and the devil are indeed "deceived". Satan showed no hesitation in trying to covenant with Christ, promising him "the glory and riches of the world," and only failed because Christ's consent was lacking. "What will hee not therefore doe with silly and sinneful men, especially when he finds them cast down with discontents?"[3] Satan is ever seeking to covenant with men, and in so doing he simply imitates God.

> "As God therefore hath made a covenant with his people, so Satan joyned in a league with the world, labouring to binde some men unto him, that so, if it were possible, he might draw them from the covenant of God and disgrace the same."[4]

Just as God instituted certain outward signs and seals of his covenant, "so the devil hath his words and certaine outward signes."

The inevitable conclusion is that man must seek to be in covenant with God. In this lies his only safety and assurance. Outside the covenant of grace man is without God and a miserable creature.[5] No man can serve two masters; he may either covenant with God or with Satan. But to either one or the other he must be tied. The one covenant means salvation; the other certain death. The person who does not believe in Christ, nor believe that his sins will be forgiven, has in effect "made a Covenant with death and sin to commit sin so long as you live."[1] The devil entices man with a covenant to live as he will; in God's covenant man lives as God wills.[2] The covenant of grace demands an active faith in God's promises and obedience in walking with God, yet it is indeed a most merciful covenant.

---

[1] Preston, op. cit., pp.480-1.
[2] Preston, Golden Scepter (1638) II.32. Bulkeley, op. cit., p.157-8
[3] Perkins, op. cit., III. p.401.
[4] ibid., III. p.615.
[5] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.480. Also Perkins, op. cit., III. p.646.

Characteristics of the Covenant

A summary of some of the chief characteristics of the covenant of grace reveals in greater detail the nature of this agreement. Aside from the numerous descriptive adjectives applied to it, such as "sweet," "excellent," "comforting," etc., these Puritan writers regarded the following qualities important:

1. It is God's covenant. It is made by God and he will establish it.[3] He sets the terms requiring what he will and engaging with whom he will.[4] There is no "equality of power and authority betwixt God and the creature," so "man is bound to accept the conditions offered by the Lord."[5] Though made with man it is not man's covenant nor are God and man joint authors. "The author and chief Executor" of the covenant is God.[6] Not only does the initiative come from God, out of his goodness, but God fulfills both parts of the covenant. God both gives the covenant and seeks out those with whom he will covenant.[7]

2. It is voluntary. Both God and man enter into the covenant

---

[1] Ames, A Sound of Sion (1663) p.7.
[2] Bulkeley, op. cit., pp.311,379.
[3] Ball, op. cit., p.198. Cf. Goodwin, Works, IX, p.71.
[4] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.354.
[5] Ball, op. cit., p.7.
[6] Ames, Marrow of Sacred Divinity, p.45.
[7] Bulkeley, op. cit., pp.352,353.

voluntarily, without constraint. "It is a most free covenant."[1] Not only has God made the covenant out of his own free will, but "it is only by voluntary acceptance of the covenant of grace" that man becomes God's.[2]

> "Is not this a great honour to us, that he will not perform things without our consent? For indeed he will not accomplish the work of our everlasting salvation without it."[3]

3. It is everlasting. This is no temporary covenant but one which "doth continue for ever with them who are once truly in covenant."[4] God is unchangeable and his love as expressed in his covenant is "an everlasting love, and the covenant which he hath made with them effectually, and shall be kept assuredly, is an everlasting covenant."[5] It can never be broken. It is established not merely "for a day or an age, or for a thousand yeares or ages,"[6] but is without end. God promised Abraham that his covenant would be "an everlasting covenant,"[7] and "he keeps Covenant and mercy for ever."[8] There is no end to God's mercy and goodness.[9]

4. It is mutual. A covenant or contract to be valid requires agreement between two parties. It is reciprocal and mutual in binding both parties. As other covenants, this covenant of grace has two parts, one in respect to God and the other in respect to man, but God engages to undertake the performance of both parts.[10] Faith and

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, VI. p.6.
[2] ibid., V. p.308.
[3] ibid., VI. p.542.
[4] Ames, op. cit., p.103; also Sibbes, op. cit., Vi. p.227.
[5] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.272; also Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.62 and Preston, Life Eternall, p.86.
[6] Perkins, Works, I. p.321.
[7] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.6
[8] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.91.
[9] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.372.
[10] Sibbes, op.cit., II. p.174. Cf. also Ball, Treatise of Covenant, p.17.

obedience are man's part, but this is given and made possible by God.[1] The covenant first requires God's action in choosing man and then in enabling man to choose God. As Sibbes puts it, "We cannot serve God without God."[2] But a subsequent action on man's part to choose God is also necessary. Men must answer God and give themselves up to be his.[3] There is a mutual claim: "He claimeth us for his, and we claim him for ours."[4] Man's will consents to the covenant, but the power and strength by which man answers is God's.[5] Therefore, "in every work that is done there is God's power and man's joined together." It is possible for man to think and to will, "but to think or will that which is good, that is from God."[6]

This reciprocal covenant relation between God and man involves a promise on God's part and "also a restipulation on man's part," even though man's part is done in God's strength.[7] The covenant is not made with those who condemn and turn from God's grace or who never heard of the covenant. "For where there is no knowledge, there is no consent;"[8] where there is no consent there is no covenant. Faith is a condition of the covenant, but faith is the gift of God. Furthermore, it is not an idle but a working faith. Works are a subsequent condition, but they are not works of law but "fruits of faith."[9] God's promises are made good "to the believer working."[10]

---

[1] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.23.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.284.
[3] ibid., V. p.319 and VII. p.62.
[4] ibid., V. p.317.
[5] Smyth, John, Works (Cambridge, 1915), I. p.civ.
[6] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.15.
[7] ibid., V. p.319.
[8] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.168.
[9] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.337.
[10] ibid., p.338.

5. It is sure. This is a covenant which has been confirmed and established by God, and therefore cannot fail. There is not only his mere promise, but God has bound himself by oath, by the blood of Christ, and by the seals of the covenant.[1] He has "promised, written it, sealed it, sworn it, Christ confirmed it."[2] God did not swear to the first covenant, but he did to this. And"what the Lord sweares to, he is sure to performe."[3] He cannot "deny himself." As Perkins observes,

> "Here againe we see Gods goodness. Wee are bound simply to beleeve by bare word; yet in regard of our weaknesse, hee is content to ratifie his promise by oath, that there might be no occasion of unbeleefe.. hee hath sworne unto us. What can wee more require of him? What better ground of true comfort?"[4]

God never lies or changes.[5] His promises are "firme and sure to all the seed." He deceives none; he deals plainly with men.[6] "There is no shadow of change in God."[7] He is faithful and true in all his promises and commandments, even though men may be inconstant and unfaithful.[8] Therefore, God's government and promises should never be questioned. God being immutable and dependable, man has a "strong consolation" and "great comfort" if God covenant with him.[9] He is "faithful in performances," and bound to perform that which he has promised.[10] His promises are not conditional, but absolute.[11] In fact, God now is not "free to performe or not to performe, for he cannot but performe that which he hath promised."[1] It is indeed "a sweet thing" that God has bound himself to man by oath. "We have the Lord in bonds," says Hooker, "for the fulfilling his part of the Covenant."[2] And God cannot go back on his promise.[3] This is of utmost importance since "all in the covenant of grace depends upon the faithfulness of God."[4]

---

[1] Preston, op. cit., pp.367-8.
[2] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.361.
[3] Preston, Saints Qualification, pp. 330, 338.
[4] Perkins, op. cit., II. p.243
[5] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.411; also Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.5.
[6] Preston, Golden Scepter, II.58.
[7] Sibbes, op. cit., IV. p.257.
[8] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.149,153,156.
[9] Preston, Life Eternall, p.85.
[10] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.151; Preston, Saints Qualification, p.330.
[11] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.249.

This covenant is further confirmed by Christ's death. In this respect it is sometimes called a Testament, Christ being the testator who ratified it. By the blood of Christ it is made a sure covenant, which stands fast for ever and ever.[5] It is Christ's death, affirms Perkins, which makes the covenant of grace "authenticall vnto vs."[6]

6. It is sealed. Covenants usually are ratified and confirmed by seals. Seals are tangible marks of the covenant which are made because of God's willingness "to condescend to man's weaknesse."[7] They offer concrete external evidence of the covenant and therefore provide man greater assurance of the covenant. A sacrament is such a sign instituted by God "sealing the Covenant of God."[8] It does not make the covenant but establishes it.[9] It is a "holy signe" confirming the covenant and indicating the grace and favor of God. It signifies both that God has bound himself in Christ to be merciful to man and that man has bound himself to be true to Christ.[10] It seals not only the grace of God but also man's "thankfulnesse and obedience towards God."

Seals serve to distinguish the various manifestations and renewals of the covenant of grace throughout history. The sacramental seals in the days of the Old Testament — circumcision and the Passover -- have since been supplanted by new seals -- baptism and the Lord's supper. Baptism marks a man's entrance into the covenant. Not that man enters into the covenant by baptism, but that baptism is the confirmation that man is in the covenant. All in the covenant of grace "ought to be baptized in order to seal the covenant."[1] Baptism is only administered to a person once "because there is but one beginning of spiritual life by regeneration as there is but one beginning of naturall life by generation."[2] Baptism once received "remaineth a perpetuall testimony and pledge of the everlasting Covenant of God."[3] It confirms the forgiveness of man's sins and is "a pledge of our adoption in Christ."[4] It proclaims that the receipent has renounced the world, the flesh and the devil and intends to live only unto God.[5]

---

[1] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.355.
[2] Hooker, T., The Faithfull Covenanter (1644) p.22.
[3] Hooker, The Sovles Vocation (1638) p.83.
[4] Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.442.
[5] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.23,196.
[6] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.220.
[7] Ball, op. cit., p.7.
[8] Ames, op. cit., p.163;
[9] Hooker, The Covenant of Grace Opened (1649) p.17.
[10] Ball, Short Treatise, p.140; also Ames, op. cit., p.165.

The Lord's supper is the sacrament by which the faithful renew their covenant with God. It should be administered only "to those who are visibly capable of nourishment and growth in the Church."[6] The covenant "solemnly ratified in Baptisme, is renued in the Lords Supper," and each time it is observed church members are stirred to perform the duties and obligations of their covenant.[7] Renewal of the covenant is essential since man sins repeatedly and thereby strains his relationship to God. Sibbes recommends renewal of the covenant daily.[8] Not that he advocates observing the Lord's supper each day, but that constant repentance and confession of man's dependence upon God and his promises be made.

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.182; cf. also Ball, op. cit., p.144.
[2] Ames, op. cit., p.182.
[3] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.411.
[4] ibid., p. 412; cf. also Preston, Breast Plate, p.203.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.299; also VII. p.28.
[6] Ames, op. cit., p.183.
[7] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.82; Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.28.
[8] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.345; also III. pp.309-310.

> "Look that continually upon all occasions thou renew thy covenant. For sometimes God's children may be in covenant, they may be his children; yet because they renew not their covenant, especially after some breaches, God is not with them so comfortably as he would, to free them from their enemies."[1]

Maintaining peace with God is not easy in light of man's weakness. "The life of a Christian is a life dependent," so that it is most necessary that man renew his covenant to God regularly.[2]

The sacrament of baptism became a center of dispute, especially among separatists, with heated arguments over whether infants should receive the sacrament. Essentially, the disturbing question was "can infants be in covenant with God?" Ames, Ball, Sibbes, Cotton, Hooker, etc. held that infants of believers should be baptized as heirs to the covenant. Most separatists, on the other hand, took the position that infants could not be in covenant because their consent was lacking. Therefore, infants should not be baptized.

Ames presents one general view by contending that the covenant made with Abraham did "expressely extend to infants" and that the covenant God makes with us is the same as that made with Abraham.[3] Children are heirs to the covenant through their parents and so are logically to be baptized. As far as Ames is concerned "faith and repentance doe no more make the covenant of God now then in the time of Abraham." Persons entering the covenant need not necessarily be of sufficient age to assume the voews entailed, for Ames recalls that

> "..in the very beginning of regeneration, whereof baptism is a seale, man is meerely passive; whence also there is

---

[1] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.396.
[2] ibid., III. p.310.
[3] Ames, op. cit., p.182.

> no outward action required of a man either to be circumcised or baptised, as in other Sacraments, but only a passive receiving; therefore Infants, are as capable of this Sacrament in respect of the chiefe use of it, as these of age are."[1]

According to this interpretation "baptisme succeeded in the place of circumcision." Children are said to have faith through their parents; "the father covenanting for himselfe and his children."[2] Therefore, since circumcision, the seal of the covenant of grace in Old Testament days, was performed to infants, why may not baptism, which is the corresponding seal now, be given in infancy?[3]

7. Its duties. The covenant of grace, like all covenants, enjoins duties. Both parties are obligated in the covenant, although both the duties stipulated on man's part as well as the promises on God's part must conform to grace and mercy. In this covenant God promises to be our God and to give us his blessings; man is obligated to take God as his God, and to serve and obey him only. If God be ours, man must be wholly his.

> "The good promised is eternall blessednesse with all good things that doe accompany it, or belong thereunto; the good required is obedience to the just and righteous Commandment of God."[4]

Two things are required of every Christian, "true faith and good life."[5] In this respect, this is a "double Covenant", a covenant of faith and a "covenant of walking before or with God."[6] Obedience which follows from faith is the main thing, for "when we have received mercy and grace through the goodnesse of God...then the Lord requires that we should walke in new obedience before him, answerable to that grace bestowed."[1]

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.183.

[2] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.483.

[3] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.78.

[4] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p. 8; cf. also p.80.

[5] Gataker, T., Marriage Dvties Briefly Couched Together (1637), p.185.

[6] Hooker, The Faithful Covenanter, p.10.

In their proper order the promises of God always go before the consent and obedience of man and become the ground of man's promise. "Else," says Ball, "we should beleeve we know not what, and faith should hang in the aire without any foundation."[2] However, God is not under any obligation of debt in this covenant. He has made promises which he will fulfill, but these are different from the duties growing out of the agreement. For God to be obligated to man would infer an equality, which, according to Ball, does not exist "between the Creator and the creature, much lesse betwixt the Lord most high, and man a sinner."[3] Man, on the other hand, is obligated to God by a double debt, as a creature and as a redeemed person. God binds himself to man in covenant only out of his abundant love to be a God and Father "of them that beleeve in God by him (Christ) and in faith do yeeld sincere, uniforme, willing, upright and constant obedience unto his Commandements." Man in covenant is required to be "sincere and perfect," and "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."[4]

8. Its benefits. The bond of the covenant and the blessings go together. When God is ours in covenant, "all other things become ours."[5] Within the covenant man has the benefit of all God's promises and nothing is wanting. Besides the general blessing of having God numerous particular benefits are listed to insure that readers are aware of the great advantages of God's covenant. The benefits of the

---

[1] Hooker, op. cit., pp.10-11.

[2] Ball, op. cit., pp.22-23.

[3] ibid., p.18. The ambiguity with which these men describe God's covenant is noted by comparing this quotation with the discussion at the top of p.107 of this chapter regarding God having "bound himself" to man in the covenant!

[4] Goodwin, T. & Ball, Thomas, in Epistle Dedicatory to Preston, Golden Scepter; cf. also Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.175.

[5] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.272; cf. Preston, Foure Godly and Learned Treatises (1636) pp.300-301.

covenant of grace, however, are not mutual. It is not like covenants among men where "each party expects some benefit."[1] Man has nothing to give God; all benefits of the covenant are from God to man.

God might have required man's obedience in the covenant without any promise of reward because he had already bestowed many things upon men; "yet to the end that men might yeeld cheerfull and free obedience,"[2] God has bound himself to reward man's faithfulness. In the covenant God has promised every thing necessary to man's salvation.[3] Man in covenant has a powerful God "who has command over life and death,"[4] "a friend able to do all things."[5] All of God's promises, both temporal and spiritual, are "free, universall, everlasting and bound with an Oath."[6]

By promises are understood "all those declarations of God's will, wherein he signifies in the Gospell what good he will freely bestow."[7] He has promised Christ himself, "the grand fundamental promise," and all God's promises are "both made and made good to us in and through him," namely Christ.[8] He who has Christ has access to God's promises; "there is nothing that you can desire but you shall finde it in him."[9]

> "If he be a Son, ye are sons. If he be an Heire, ye are heires...consider all the particulars of the wealth of a Christian, that all is yours."[10]

Sometimes God's promises are differentiated as being either absolute without any condition, so he promised Christ, or as "conditional in the manner of propounding, but yet absolute in the real performance of them," such was the promise of grace and forgiveness of sins, etc. While these latter are called conditional, yet God performs the condition.[1] Therefore, while promises are offered by way of covenant with stipulations attached, still from the point of view of "God's gracious performance...all the promises are legacies."[2]

---

[1] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.351.
[2] Ball, op. cit., p.8.
[3] ibid., p.156.
[4] Sibbes, op. cit., IV. p.438.
[5] Preston, Life Eternall, p.187.
[6] Taylor, Works, p.188.
[7] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.209.
[8] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.118; Perkins, op. cit., II. p.243.
[9] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.180.
[10] Preston, Breast Plate, p.243.

Corresponding to the three offices to which Christ is called, Preston outlines three main promises which are found in Christ.[3] As a Priest, Christ makes possible the forgiveness of sins; as a Prophet he teaches such knowledge "as enlightens euery man within;" as a King he provides an abundance of all things and protection from enemies. The promises of the covenant are thus of three sorts: promises of justification, promises of sanctification, and promises of "blessings of all sorts." "I will forgive thy sins;" "I will make you new hearts and new spirits;" "I will make you heires of the world."[4]

All of these promises are really inseparable. To have one means to have all others. "Where one is named, others are implyed,

---

1.Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.394. John Ball seeking a way to emphasize as much as possible the conditional aspect of the divine-human relationship, interprets God's promises somewhat differently though not essentially so. He contends the promises of God are conditional to those "persons in Covenant according to the externall administration." "If they doe well they shall be accepted; if they consent and obey, they shall inherit the good things of the land." "To those he has effectually called," God's promises are made absolutely, because "God will give them to doe what he requireth." (Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.154) Behind the abstruse argument it is apparent that for Ball, as for Sibbes, the covenant is not made where God's promises are not absolute. Since promises were the very essence of the idea of covenant, it is interesting to compare these statements with Ball's treatment of absolute and conditional covenants.(see p.95 in this chapter.)

2.Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.415.

3.Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.373-384.

4.Preston, Fovre Godly and Learned Treatises, p.300; also Nevv Covenant, pp.467,476.

and where one is given, no one is absolutely wanting."[1] Sanctification, for instance, will follow where justification is. "God crowns grace with grace;"[2] he whom God forgives, he will sanctify.[3] Both the forgiveness of sins, or justification, and "the killing of sinne and quickening us to newnesse of life," or sanctification, are necessary to man's salvation and both are promised in this covenant.[4]

To these two main spiritual promises are added earthly blessings. God has promised to furnish his people with all needful things pertaining to this life. "God is the great Father of the family who provideth all things necessary for them that be under his government."[5]

The general benefit of the covenant is summed up in the phrase, God is our God. When God is ours, "all other things become ours."[6] To be our God means

> "to be a God in a peculiar manner, to give all things necessary for grace and life too--for this life and for a better; to do all things requisite to bring us to heauen and happiness through Christ...to direct the protections and provisions of this life, of our estate here, of a supernatural happiness hereafter, to a state beyond nature."[7]

God is ours not only in the sense that he gives grace to begin a new life, but also persevering grace.

> "God deals not with us as the husbandman does, sows the ground and leave it. No, God watches and weeds us, and continued his labour upon us, till he brings us to the end of his promise."[8]

---

[1] Ball, John, A Tryall of the New-Church Way (1644) p.67. Also Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.271.
[2] Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, p.6.
[3] Sibbes, Works, IV. p.221; also Preston, Golden Scepter, II.47 and Saints Qualification, p.310.
[4] Ball, Treatise of Faith, pp.212,237.
[5] Ball, ibid., p.354; cf. also pp.260,353.
[6] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.263.
[7] ibid., VI. p.7.
[8] ibid., V. p.16. See also Perkins, op. cit., I. p.157.

Nothing is as certain as the accomplishment of God's promises. "He that builds his hope on faith in God's promises," writes Sibbes, "nothing is so sure as he shall attain his desire."[1] Heaven and earth shall pass away before any of God's promises shall fail.[2] It may be that God will not immediately make good his promises, yet he never fails to perform them. Sometimes they are made good only gradually and by degrees.[3] Therefore, those who complain that God's promises have not been fulfilled are advised to remain faithful, and to be patient, for God in his own time will certainly accomplish that which he has promised. The faithfulness of God gives assurance of his promised benefits.

9. It is holy. Not only is this a covenant made by a most holy God but it requires holiness in all who claim it. God is the king of saints.[4] He rules over "just, righteous and holy people." Only those are in this covenant of grace who are holy and righteous.

Who is in Covenant?

Just as all mankind was created good in Adam, so God entered into covenant with "our first parents as they were the root of all their posterity."[5] All men, therefore, partook in the first covenant, which Adam broke. When, after the fall, God made a second covenant with Adam, Adam was no longer the "root of mankind," but a mere individual. The new covenant was made with Christ and those who believed in him. Christ, not Adam, represented us, according to Goodwin,[6] in

---

1. Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.508.
2. Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.416.
3. Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.546.
4. Bulkeley, op. cit., p.373.
5. Ball, Short Treatise, p.65.
6. Goodwin, Tho., Works, IV. pp.27-28; also I. pp.31,455 & IX. p.396.

this second covenant, which is made with believers.

Adam, therefore, was the representative of the race only in respect to nature and not to grace.[1]

> "Adam before his fall, did indeed receiue the grace both for himself, and for others also: and in the fall, he lost it both for himselfe and for all others; but after the fall he receiued the promise for himselfe alone, and not for the whole world; otherwise the first Adam should not haue beene a liuing creature, but a quickening spirit, the which is proper to the second Adam."[2]

The covenant of grace, consequently, was never written in man's nature as was the first covenant, but it was given after the fall and so stands above nature.[3] God's promise to Eve after the fall distinguished between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, so that a part of mankind was excluded from this new covenant. When God promised Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, Perkins' interpretation is that "the promise must not be vnderstood of all men in eurie age, but of all nations in the best age of the world."[4]

In no age have all people been in this covenant. In the days of the Old Testament, the Patriarchs and their posterity, and the Israelites were the chosen people with whom God entered into covenant, and yet even all the Israelites were not God's elect. With the coming of Christ the covenant was "stricken with all Nations...but not every one in every nation, nor every nation in all periods of that time."[5]

Therefore, all men have never been in God's covenant of grace, nor can all hope to be.[1] Its membership is limited to persons "entirely beloved of the Lord."[2] Perkins maintains that "the greatest part of the world" has always been outside the covenant,[3] while Ball merely states that "many thousands are excluded."[4] Considered by themselves the elect may be regarded as "innumerable," but in comparison to the whole world they are few.[5] These Puritans generally agree God never intended that every person should be saved. "God is not the God of all by Covenant," but has chosen to be God of "a remnant, a little handful of people."[6] Only those are in covenant whom God so intended -- "the godly and their seed."[7] Women are not excluded,[8] nor are children, if they are the offsprings of believers.[9]

---

[1] Cf. Ames, op. cit., p.55; Sibbes, op. cit., VII. pp.111,122; Ball, Answer to Two Treatises of Mr. Iohn Can (1642) p.52.
[2] Perkins, Works, I. p.113.
[3] ibid., I. p.516.
[4] ibid., I. p.516.
[5] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.202.

Those with whom God covenants are the people of God, his Church, "the seed of Abraham or children of Christian parents."[10] But some are the people of God only outwardly, while others are inwardly and in secret. God covenants with some externally "calling them by his Word, and sealing them by his Sacraments, and they by profession of faith and receiving of the Sacraments oblige themselves to the condition required." In this respect all members of the visible church are in covenant.

> "With others God doth make his Covenant effectually,
> writing his Law in their hearts by his Holy Spirit,

---

[1] Cf. Bulkeley, op. cit., p.354. (quotes Ephesians ii.12)
[2] Ball, op. cit., p.103.
[3] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.113; also I. p.167.
[4] Ball, op. cit., p.167; cf. also Bulkeley, op. cit., p.377.
[5] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.189.
[6] Ball, op. cit., pp.243,244; Bulkeley, op. cit., p.127.
[7] Taylor, Works, p.189.
[8] Ball. op. cit., p.90.
[9] ibid., p.52.
[10] Ball, Short Treatise, p.144.

> and they freely and from the heart give up themselves unto the Lord, in all things to be ruled and guided by him."[1]

The wicked may be in covenant with God outwardly but never inwardly.[2] The inward covenant is the "outward means of executing the decree of Election."[3] While all who are outwardly in covenant are not partakers of the spiritual blessings promised in the covenant, yet, on the other hand, explains Ball, "we cannot affirme they pertaine to the Covenant of Grace...whom God doth not vouchsafe so much as outwardly to receive into Covenant."[4] While any who are not in covenant with God outwardly are not "absolutely excluded" from the covenant, generally it is assumed that he who really is in covenant with God inwardly will surely indicate that fact outwardly by participation in the visible church.

How is the Covenant Entered?

The condition of the first covenant, the covenant of works, can be simply stated and readily understood; to enter that covenant man must perfectly obey the law and do God's commandments. The second covenant, the covenant of grace, being of a different nature requires a different condition -- faith. Ball defines faith as "a lively motion of the heart and soule assenting unto, and trusting in the word of God as firme and stedfast."[5] But faith is not "mere assent;" it is "real obedience."[6] It pertains both to the understanding and to the will; it "opens the eyes to see" and "stirs the will to pursue...the grace revealed."[7] To live by faith, writes Henry Scudder, is "to frame your

---

1.Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.202-203.
2.Hooker, Faithful Covenanter, p.16.
3.Perkins, op. cit., I. p.31; also Goodwin,T., Works, IX. p.41.
4.Ball, op. cit., p.92; cf. also p.47.
5.ibid., p.60.
6.Preston, Breast Plate, p.34.
7.Bulkeley, op. cit., p.303.

life according to the will of God revealed in his Word."[1] To live by faith is to walk with God, for faith is "the instrument to obtaine righteousness and life eternall."[2]

It is faith thus defined which God requires as the condition of the covenant of grace. Repentance is indeed necessary, but "faith only is the cause of life."[3] Obedience to God's commandments is also necessary but it is an effect of faith and in no sense the cause of salvation. Repentance, faith, and obedience might all be regarded conditions of the covenant, but in a strict sense faith or "beliefe in the promises of free mercy" is the only condition.[4]

How does a man get faith to enable him to enter covenant with God? Faith is the gift of God.[5] "It is as childish," writes Sibbes, "to think that grace comes from any principle within us as to think that the dew which falls upon a stone is the sweat of the stone."[6] Or to employ Ball's metaphor, "a man of himselfe can no more believe, than a corrupt fountaine can send forth sweet waters."[7] It is God who gives the grace by which man "is enabled and effectually drawne to doe what God commandeth."[8] Faith is "the gift of gifts,"[9] "the grace of graces,"[10] which is "given from above."

> "It is not in the power of any man living to bring his heart to this consent, nor is any creature able to doe it, you may as well bring fire and water to agree to-

---

[1] Scudder, Henry, The Christians Daily Walke..(1642) p.4.
[2] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.516.
[3] Ball, op. cit., pp.19 and 349.
[4] ibid., p.348.
[5] Ames, Marrow, p.113; Perkins, op. cit., I. p.125; Ball, op. cit., pp.154-155.
[6] Sibbes, op. cit., II. p.331.
[7] Ball, Short Treatise, p.101.
[8] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.23.
[9] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.131.
[10] Sibbes, preface to Ball, Treatise of Faith.

> gether, as to bring the heart of a naturall man to be willing to match with the Lord."[1]

Under the circumstances God must change man's nature, casting him into a "new frame" so as to make him willing to enter into covenant. Besides "his purchase of helps whereby men might be saved" Christ also "purchased an invincible overcoming of their wills for whom he died."[2] Therefore, Preston tells us,

> "the Lord ruleth no where as a King, but where hee rules first as a Prophet, that is, except he first perswade the heart by an inward enlightening, that it is best for the heart to be subject, the will and the affections will never yield."[3]

Yet until God, through Christ, has forgiven man his sins and given him the grace to walk in a new way, no man can enter into covenant with God. The covenant is conditional upon faith, but God has made absolute promises to give, as it pleases him, the power necessary to fulfill the condition.[4] "God, he gives us to believe, he bids us to repent, he gives us power to repent."[5]

It is difficult to perswade men of this "great mysterie of godlinesse," writes Preston,

> "that the righteousnesse prepared by Christ should be offered to them, and nothing be required by receiving of it."[6]

Men somehow think they "must doe something precedently" or else they cannot receive this righteousness, but God requires nothing of man until after he has received it. Good works are "the effects of the Spirit in us."[7]

---

[1] Preston, Golden Scepter, II.13; also II.334.
[2] Goodwin, T., Works, IX. p.17.
[3] Preston, op. cit., II.13.
[4] Scudder, op. cit., p.732.
[5] Sibbes, Works, V. p.18.
[6] Preston, Breast Plate, p.34.
[7] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.23.

So it is that God invites men to covenant and to serve him in all things, yet

> "the ability by which we are able to perform these is a part of the Couenant on the Lords part, to haue new hearts and new spirits, whereby wee are able to repent and to bring forth fruits worthy of amendment of life."[1]

God will enable those with whom he has intended to covenant to perform that which he enjoins in the covenant.[2] When God agrees to enter into covenant, he provides the means whereby man can covenant with him, if the man is willing.

> "Though God deals with his people by way of covenant, as if you repent, if you believe, if you obey, yet he gives, by way of testament, the grace that he bestows."[3]

It is "a point of wondrous comfort and duty" that God gives the grace to enter covenant. It means that the promises of this covenant are not only upon condition but absolutely and as a testament. Unless this be true, says Sibbes, "there would be no more strength of the covenant of grace than there was of that of nature in Adam."[4] The second covenant does not leave man to his own freedom, but is established in Christ who not only teaches man what to do but enables him to do it.[5]

The initiative to covenant is thus always with God. Nothing that man can do of himself will in any manner enable him to enter into a covenant with God. It is not for his faith, for he hath none, but to his faith that God elects man.[6] Therefore, no man can think that salvation depends in part upon himself. Rather it forces him to look altogether to God.

---

[1] Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.338-339.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.18.
[3] ibid., VI. p.541.
[4] ibid., V. p.342.
[5] ibid., V. p.347. Cf. also Ball, Short Treatise, p.93.
[6] Perkins, op. cit., II. p.283.

> "We are but subordinate agents, moving as we are moved, and working as we are first wrought upon, free so farre forth as we are freed, no wiser nor stronger than hee makes us to be for the present in any thing we undertake. It is his Spirit that actuates and inliveneth and applieth that knowledge and strength we have."[1]

God knows that man of himself is nothing; therefore, " he requireth no more than he giveth, and giveth what he requireth."[2]

How is this faith wrought in man? Externally by the preaching of the Word, internally by the operation of the Holy Spirit.[3] The Word works faith

> "by shewing us our misery, and the true meanes of our recoverie, encouraging us being humbled to receive the promises of the Gospel."[4]

Is there a certain quantity of faith necessary before a man may be said to have truly received God's favor? The answer is no; "it is most sure, that if they haue faith, but as much as a graine of mustard seed, and be as weake as a young infant is, it is sufficient to engraffe the into Christ."[5] If a man have "any faith," he need not doubt God's love.[6]

> "Weake faith will as truly apprehend Gods mercifull promises for the pardon of sinne, as strong faith, though not so soundly. Euen as man with a palsie hand can stretch it out as well to receiue a gift at the hand of a king, as hee that is more sound, though it be not so firmely and stedfastly."[7]

---

[1] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.93.
[2] ibid., I. p.58.
[3] Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, pp.326-7,329; also Short Treatise, pp.100-101.
[4] Ball, Short Treatise, p.102.
[5] Perkins, Works, I. p.115.
[6] Scudder, op. cit., pp.577-578.
[7] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.128.

Said another way, the least faith a Christian may have is compared "to flaxe that hath fire in it, but so weake that it can neither giue heat nor light, but onely maketh a smoke, and is called a little faith."[1] This was a favorite simile with Richard Sibbes who used it in the title of one of his treatises.[2] Since a Christian has both grace and nature in him, a little grace is smoking flax because it is "mingled with corruption."[3] What Christ does is not to quench the smoking flax, but by increasing grace to blow it into flame.

Consequently a small amount of grace is not to be despised, nor held a ground for despair.[4] "A sparke of fire is fire as well as the whole Element. Therefore we must look to Grace in the sparke as well as in the flame."[5] Grace in this life is small and "alwaies imperfect" being "mingled with contrarie vnbeleefe and sundry doubtings more or lesse."[6] Here man receives only the first fruits of God's spirit, so that even little faith is deemed precious and should be stirred up and used. Sometimes a man may have so little grace that it is indiscernible and a "secret operation," yet it is effective.[7]

It should, therefore, be a great comfort to Christians that they may look to even a tiny spark of grace as effectual, if it be sincerely held. "Small beginnings of grace" are regarded a sign of hope,[8] for grace "falls by degrees, like the dew, undiscernibly."[9]

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.136.
[2] "The Bruised Reede and Smoaking Flax" in volume I of Sibbes, Works.
[3] Sibbes, Works, I. p.50.
[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.81; also Scudder, op. cit., pp.579-580.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.58.
[6] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.129; also pp.259-260.
[7] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.59.
[8] ibid., I. p.49.
[9] ibid., VII. p.221.

Furthermore, "grace begets grace," and a great matter can arise from a small beginning.[1] And since all do not receive the same measure of grace, all do not have the same amount of faith toward God.[2] Though some have more than others, believers are assured that a small amount is sufficient to assure the promises of God and the blessings which Christ offers, for "little faith be faith, as a little fire is fire."[3] It is the sincerity and truth of faith, not its amount, which determines its effectiveness.[4]

But no man should content himself with his little faith, for "if he do it is to be feared that he hath none at all."[5] Small beginnings are rather to be considered as pledges of great favors,[6] and should be increased by exercise and continual use. God will not despise "the least sparke of faith" if it does increase little by little. A man must "stirre vp" his faith continually.[7]

Faith is increased in much the same manner as it was first wrought, though now man has a part in its growth. It grows by the hearing of the Word preached, by earnest prayer, by receiving the sacraments, etc. Especially, advises Preston, "if thou wouldst haue much grace reade the Scriptures exceeding much, make it thy chiefest study from day to day."[8] Moreover a man should "watch over his heart at all times, in all places, occasions, and condition" to see that his faith is preserved and his heart filled with good. Only by such care and exercise continually undertaken does faith increase.

---

[1] Sibbes, op. cit., II. p.165.
[2] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.143.
[3] ibid., p.172.
[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.386.
[5] Scudder, op. cit., p.579.
[6] Ball, op. cit., p.172; also p.164.
[7] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.81
[8] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.457.

> "If you have faith use it: many have it, that doe not use it...for though God work in you all the worke of faith...yet know, he doth not worke in you only but by you."[1]

This explains why some men have more faith than others: they have used what little they were given and made it stronger. God gives a like amount of "receiving faith" to his chosen, states Preston, but some men have more "working faith" because they have nurtured it.[2]

It would thereby appear that man does have a part even "though it begin with God,"[3] and though God guides man's steps.[4] God undertakes both parts of the covenant, not in the sense that man does nothing at all, but that it is God who enables man to do his part. It is only by God's grace that the covenant is struck; that is why it is a covenant of grace. "Faith," says Sibbes, "is nothing else but a spiritual echo, returning that voice back again which God first speaks to the soul."[5] Therefore, while faith is the gift of God, it is also an act of man.

> "The power to believe, and will to use that power is of God: But the act of the will in resting upon Christ is mans. It is man that beleeveth, but it is God only and altogether that inableth, stirreth up, putteth forward, and enclineth the heart to believe. By Gods enlightening man seeth, by his teaching he understands: and the Lord inclining his will, hee willeth, embraceth, possesseth and keepeth Christ with all blessings promised in him. So that faith is the motion of mens heart wrought in him by the Spirit of God."[6]

Preston describes man's part in the covenant this way:

---

[1] Preston, Breast Plate, p.239.
[2] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.415.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.481
[4] Preston, Golden Scepter, II.126.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.263.
[6] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.12.

> "the inward ability, the change of heart, the renewing of vs in the spirit of our mindes, the writing of the Law in the inward parts, that is a branch of God's Covenant, but the doing of this, the bringing forth the fruit of these inward abilities, of these inward habits and graces that are planted in vs by the power of Christ, that thing is required of vs. As for example, the very habit of faith, the very grace and power of beleeuing, that God hath promised to giue, it belongs to him, but to beleeue, to take the promises, to accept of Iesus Christ, and to receiue him, and the gift of righteousnesse by him, this is required as a condition on our part."[1]

God's grace and man's response are both involved in the covenant. God gives grace, but man must take hold of God's grace and use it. "His love of us is the cause of our love to him."[2] Men are likened to wind instruments; "we sound, but no further than we are blown upon ...we yeeld music, but no further then we are touched by the Spirit of God."[3] To put this new grace to work, "to yeeld music," men must indicate truly by their manner of life that God is their God. In the covenant God requires that man be altogether his, if he is to be ours. This cannot be any half-hearted agreement. As "an act flowing from Faith,"[4] the covenant demands sincerity and integrity of life; it demands repentance and serving the Lord in newness of life.

So the doctrine that "God must doe all" is not "a discouraging doctrine" which "teacheth every man to sit still."[5] It is no invitation to quietism. The state of a Christian is not an "idle condition" but "a busy trade" involving all manner of works.[6] Grace is given to the end that "we must lead an holy life, a religious, sober and righteous

---

1.Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.389-390.
2.Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.88.
3.ibid., V. p.190.
4.Ames, op. cit., p.7.
5.Preston, Saints Qualification, p.458.
6.Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.185.

life."[1]

Perkins points out that while it is true "God has appointed all things to come to passe in his eternall and vnchangeable counsell," yet he has also "set downe the meanes and waies whereby he will have the same things brought to passe."[2] Confusion arises when these two things are not kept separate.

> "It is grosse ignorance and madnesse in men, to reason so against Gods decree; God in his vnchangeable counsell, hath decreed and set downe all things how they shall be; therefore I will vse no meanes, but liue as I list: nay, rather we must say the contrarie; because God hath decreed this thing or that to be done, therefore I will vse the meanes which God hath appointed to bring the same to passe."[2]

The doctrine of the covenant is no invitation to libertines who argue that since God's enabling grace has been vouchsafed, therefore man may do anything. "God will not be mercifull to such as go on in wicked, rotten, scandalous courses."[3] The freedom of the man who has been admitted to the covenant is not a freedom to do what he will.[4] It is only "carnall and formall Protestants" who turn God's election into "wantonnesse" by arguing that "if I am elected to salvation, I shall be saved, so let me live as I will."[5] The covenant of grace is not an argument for free-will,[6] but rather where faith is given, obedience is required as the way of life. Grace offered in the covenant demands that men "take a yoake upon them, and stand obliged to fulfill the law of Christ, called the new Commandement."[7]

---

[1] Preston, Breast Plate, p.34.
[2] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.144.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.57.
[4] Cf. Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, pp.111-112.
[5] Perkins, op. cit., III. p.519.
[6] Greenham, Works, p.590.
[7] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.371.

Obedience is a corollary to faith; the Christian's life is full of duties. It is an "inseparable consequent," writes John Ball, "that if we embrace God by faith, wee must and ought to follow his Commandements by our deeds."[1] Where there is disobedience, there is obviously no faith. But before there can be any "works of righteousness" there must be an inward righteousness.

> "The Spirit of God must first work a holy frame and disposition in us, before we can bring forth any fruits of holiness in our lives."[2]

Those who take God to be their God in covenant must give themselves to him by obeying his laws. They must stir themselves to strive more and more after perfection. Unless a man be resolved to obey God in all things, it is useless for him to think of entering into covenant with God.[3]

True, a man's obedience in this life cannot be perfect, but nevertheless he should strive to obey in order that he might attain absolute perfection in heaven.[4] While the estate of God's children here is imperfect, they are "under hope" of a better estate, and so should undertake a general reformation of life.[5] God means to bring those in covenant to perfection in heaven, therefore, advised Sibbes, "labour for growth, to grow better and better...by little and little."[6] Life in this world is to be used "to make a beginning for a better life," and Christians are differentiated by their faithfulness in performing their duties, and obeying God's laws.

Thus, it is clear that the law is not abrogated in the new covenant, nor are the law and the gospel completely exclusive. The gospel is not without law. The law preceeded the gospel, as the Covenant of Works preceeded the Covenant of Grace, and in a manner the gospel may be said to have supplanted the law. However, the law as "that part of God's Word, which commands things just, honest, and godly,"[1] is still a part of the covenant of grace, though no longer in a covenant form which if a man break, he will perish. The law is "perfect, most holy, equall, and good," and serves to teach man "how to serve God in holinesse and righteousnesse all the dayes of his life."[2] Not the ceremonial law which concerned only the Jews, nor the judicial law which did "primarily concerne" the Jews, but the moral law, which concerns all people, still stands to be obeyed. This moral law, summed up in the Ten Commandments, is "part of Gods Word concerning righteousnesse and godlinesse...and commandeth perfect obedience, both inward in thought and affection, and outward in speech and action."[3] He who enters God's covenant assumes "lawes from God."[4]

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.32.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.395.
[3] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.22.
[4] ibid., p.89.
[5] Preston, Breast Plate, p.201; Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.140.
[6] Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.61 and V. p.360.

What Breaks the Covenant?

Despite the freeness of the covenant many are hindered from entering into it.

> "Some there are that never heard of the Lord Jesus, some there are that heare of such an offer but cannot believe it, some againe that doe believe it, yet are not willing to live under him, but would live according to their liberty, they are not willing to change their condition."[5]

So that even though a man may be enabled by God to enter the covenant,

---

1. Perkins, Works, III. p.33.
2. Scudder, op. cit., pp.109,151.
3. Perkins, op.cit., III. p.33.
4. Bulkeley, op. cit., p.45.
5. Preston, Golden Scepter, II.38-9.

there still remains the difficulty of keeping it. Richard Greenham lists two special hindrances in keeping covenant: "the subtiltie of Sathan, reasoning in vs: I would gladly vow, but when I have vowed such a good thing, I am further from performing my vow, than euer I was before;" and secondly, the way "satan doth buffet vs," by saying when some break has been made in the covenant, "thou hast broken thy bond, thou hast violated thy couenant...why doest thou therefore continue, and striuest any further in vaine."[1]

If the covenant is entered into "vnaduisedly and rashly with the secret presuming of our selues, and not of God," it will indeed be impossible to keep, for only continued grace from God enables man to make good his vows. Only a natural sinful man thinks that he by himself can keep the covenant. No man should presume that he can keep the covenant by his own strength. He is not saved by the quality of his faith, but "by the worth of Christ, the person on whom he beleeveth."[2] True faith, though small, can apprehend Christ, since, according to Sibbes, "perfection in us is sincerity."[3]

> "The Covenant of Grace calleth for perfection, accepteth sincerity, God in mercy pardoning the imperfection of our best performances."[4]

With sincerity a man can do all things required in the covenant of grace.[5] The Christian in covenant with God may still sin, but because he is in covenant, no single sin will cut him off from God. God's elect in this world all have some remains of Adam's nature of sin in them; they are not capable of perfect obedience.

---

[1] Greenham, op. cit., p.590.
[2] Scudder, op. cit., p.578.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.125 and V. p.394.
[4] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.20-21.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.137.

> "The greatest meanes of perfection attainable in this present life is an imperfect imperfection, and therefore, though we come short, we must strive forward towards perfection."[1]

Obedience is called for, but it is not the perfect obedience in the legal manner of the covenant of works. Rather in the covenant of grace it is the intention and direction of the will which is most important.[2] God requires love in duties more than duties themselves.[3] He does not so much inquire "how great or little, as how sincere our faith and obedience is."[4] God looks to man's endeavor and desire to keep the covenant, and to the affection with which he acts rather than the mere act itself.[5]

To say, in the second place, that a sin necessarily breaks the covenant is to misunderstand the nature of that covenant. It is not of law, but of grace. As Greenham says, "Christ did not onely die for our sinnes before Baptisme, but also for our sinnes after Baptisme;" therefore, some "imfirmitie and frailtie" of man will not break the covenant.[6] These sins are forgiven just as were former sins. There is, however, a difference between "a breach of humane obliuion" and one of "obstinate maliousness," or "impenitency and unbeliefe". For the latter kinds persisted in are tantamount to violating the covenant. He who neglects the offer of grace or who turns back from grace which he has received or abuses grace by his wantonness makes the covenant void.[7]

---

[1] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.79.
[2] Cf. Scudder, op. cit., p.119.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.40.
[4] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.112.
[5] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of GRace, p.84; also Taylor, Works, p.104.
[6] "After many offences the Covenant of grace may stand firme still." Bulkeley, op. cit., p.83.
[7] Bulkeley, op.cit., pp.95-6.

Instead, therefore, of allowing Satan to persuade us that one sin breaks the covenant, we are not to be discouraged "if we slip or faile in some particular." God "will spare vs for a particular breach, so it be not a general contempt and done of wilfull malice."[1] Men must examine themselves to see whether they still look to God and renew their covenant, recalling that their sins are pardoned.

God for his part never dissolves the covenant. He keeps his covenant for ever, "though thou be weake in thy carriage to him."[2] Despite "much vnevennesse" in men's ways, God is "mercifull and long-suffering." If the perpetuation of the covenant depended upon man then its everlasting quality would indeed be open to question. But this is a covenant confirmed by God and as such cannot be broken.[3]

But did not God break his part of the covenant when Israel sinned? This Preston answers by explaining that it was only "a single covenant" specifying "if you will believe and repent, and walke in my wayes, you shall be saved." When the condition is broken,"God is freed of his promises." This is different from "a double covenant," in which God performs both parts and which stipulates,

> "If you will believe and repent, you shall be saved, and I will give you an heart, and you shall repent and beleeve and be saved; I began the works and I will finish it."[4]

Here God not only does his part, but enables man to perform his part. The covenant of grace since Christ is impossible to be broken because God engages to do both parts.

What happens then when a man in covenant sins? God still

---

[1] Greenham, op. cit., p.591.

[2] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.91.

[3] Perkins, Works, II. p.243; as Ball says even "the infidelity of man cannot make the faith of God of none effect." (op. cit., p.154.)

[4] Preston, Life Eternall, p.86.

"keepeth the minde and purpose of a Father;" he will forgive those who are in covenant with him.[1] "A sinne or two" or even "daily failings" shall not break the covenant, for

> "except there be a quite turning backe, except thou altogether forsake God, except thou leave God, and chuse thee a new Master (this indeed breaketh the Covenant) otherwise, if it be but a failing...but a sinne of infirmitie...when as yet thou keepest God in thy heart...think not that those sinnes, although they be great, breake the covenant."[2]

Every man, as Sibbes puts it, "does not fall on all four" by sinning, and therefore, though he fall he should "stir up grace" and recover himself again.[3] He should renew his covenant. When a man does this, still desiring to be God's, the covenant will remain fast.

It may be that at times God will partly withdraw his grace to such an extent that men will fail in their duties.[4] God sometimes does this "to make them ashamed of themselues and to cause them to put all their confidence out of themselves in the merits of Christ."[5] But God's promise is absolute and ultimately will not fail. The covenant is made with God's elect and they can never completely fall from grace.[6]

Only when a man refuses to serve God any longer and chooses to belong to another is the covenant broken. As long as a man in covenant continues to look to God "the Couenant remaines sure, notwithstanding all infirmities."[7] "The Couenant is neuer nullified," insists Preston, "vntill thou hast chosen to thy selfe another Husband, till thou hast taken to thy selfe another Lord."[1]

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.138.
[2] Preston, Breast Plate, pp.249-250.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.366.
[4] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.264.
[5] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.198; also II. p.216.
[6] ibid., I. p.288.
[7] Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.460,467.

Men who question the covenant and their interest in it by their doubting hinder their keeping the covenant. They question God's promises and think them impossible. They lack, what Sibbes calls, the "watchfulnesse and diligence" to make their calling certain.[2] "Idle complaining" and doubting will never enable a man to keep the covenant. Nor will men be able to keep it if the covenant is taken for granted and men forget "what a gracious and merciful covenant they live under." Not only must the covenant constantly be kept in remembrance, with due thankfulness for the graciousness of it, but it is important to "get sound evidence of a good estate, and then likewise to keep our evidence clear."[3]

How Know Whether One is in Covenant?

This was the central perplexing question which covenant theology raised. It is the topic to which the writers came back again and again as they seek to set forth some rational basis upon which a man might determine whether or not he is in covenant with God. In Calvin's terms it was the familar question of whether or not a man was among God's elect. It was the crucial point upon which a person desired assurance. Is there a sure way a man can judge for himself whether he is in covenant with God?

As already noted, all men are certainly not in covenant with God, for he did not intend to include all. That God covenants with any is a sign of his mercy and kindness and a point of great comfort and thankfulness. But while the rightness and justice of this doctrine are accepted, the important personal question arises, Am I one of God's chosen people? Am I in covenant with God? Has God left any signs by which I can measure my state?

---

[1] Preston, op. cit., pp.458-459.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.124.
[3] ibid.

It is clear that outward prosperity is no determining mark of God's favor. In this life even the wicked oftentimes prosper, although but temporarily,[1] so that riches and well being in this life is not necessarily a mark of the covenant. Outward blessings are signs of God's grace and help give assurance of one's estate before God.[2] But they are not sure evidences. Neither are learning or knowledge certain marks of spiritual grace.[3] Knowledge is "commendable," but at best it is only "a scaffold in the building."[4] Understanding only forms a basis upon which a life of righteousness can be built. Therefore, it is necessary to probe deeper for an answer to the question.

William Perkins, along with others of these practical minded Puritans, would say that God is most wise, just, and merciful in all his ways, but his ways are inscrutable. It is "dangerous and not to be attempted," warns Perkins, to inquire into God's providence "by ascending vp as it were into heauen, there to search the counsell of God, and afterwards to come down to our selues." For the ways of God are "vnsearchable and past finding out."[5] God's election is a "secret mysterie" and man cannot know God's purposes. Sibbes in a similar vein advises,

> "Let us not call into question God's providence...It
> is the will of God so to dispose, and the will of God
> is summa justitia, the height of justice. God will

---

[1] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.269.
[2] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.267.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.269.
[4] ibid., V. p.103.
[5] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.290.

> have it so. Let us make our peace with him, and not demand why he doth thus and thus."[1]

The mystery of God's predestination is to be wondered at and accepted rather than questioned or examined.[2] Men are not to reason over "dark disputes of election and predestination."[3]

And yet after having issued this warning, Perkins and Sibbes both affirm that "a man may know his own estate in grace."[4] God's purposes are not to be sought in "the bottomless counsel of God but rather in the manifestation of it." Man cannot find assurance in things unknown or uncertain, but God has already revealed his purposes in his Word and sacraments. From this revelation already given men can "attaine to a certain knowledge of their owne election." How? "by descending into their owne hearts to goe vp from our selues as it were by Iacobs ladder, to Gods eternall counsell."[5] Men should labor to know their estate by examining themselves, for there is nothing in the world more worth laboring for than "getting sound evidence" that God is ours.[6]

> "How standest thou affected to God and to good things? Look to thy heart whether God have taught it to love or no, and to relish heavenly things. If he hath, thy state is good. And then thou mayest ascend to those great matters of predestination and election. But begin not with those, but go first to thine heart, and then to these deep mysteries afterwards. If a man love God, he may look back to election, and forward to glorification...But see first what God hath wrought in thy heart, what affection to heavenly things; and thence from thy affections to go backward to election, and forward to glorification, there is no danger in it."[7]

1.Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.87.
2.ibid., V. p.350 and VII. p.23.
3.ibid., IV. p.182.
4.ibid., III. p.221; Perkins, op. cit., I. p.117.
5.Perkins, op. cit., I. p.290.
6.Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.270.
7.ibid., IV. p.182.

A man may come to know of his election by inward searching. No assurance can come to the man who thinks himself to be elect but refrains from examining himself. In fact, "the vnwillingness to enter into this inquisition giueth occasion of vehement suspition that one is not regenerated."[1] If a man wants to know whether he had God's favor, he must examine himself.[2] No man can be sure of his salvation unless he can read "the effects of Gods love" in his heart.

Preston proposes that a man may know whether he be in covenant by considering whether he has "faith that worketh by loue," whether he has "the Spirit of the Sonne," and whether he "haue my law written in your hearts."[3] If a man has such knowledge and grace, then two things follow: "your heart is circumcised," and there "breeds in you a forwardnesse and willingnesse to serue the Lord in all things." A man within covenant has "a wondrous desire to grow in grace, to doe the duties of new obedience."[4] Therefore, if God is truly our God, there will be, says Sibbes, a care to please God in all times and places because God is everywhere; if God is our God, then grace is given for us "to love him above all things;" if we make God our God, "we may know it by our obedience, especially by the obedience of the inward man."[5] God's Spirit is a "vigorous working thing" which leaves manifestations of God's presence and favor.[6] Faith and good works are the fruits of God's election.[7] If God

"Hath sealed thee by the inward witnesse of his Spirit

---

[1] Whately, Wm., The Nevv Birth. (1619) p.101.
[2] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.392; Ames, Marrow, p.132; Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.85.
[3] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.406.
[4] ibid., p.432.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.12.
[6] ibid., IV. p.214.
[7] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.287; Ball, op. cit., p.113.

> and hath sealed thee likewise by the fruit of amendment of life...Make no more question, take it for granted, that Christ belongs to thee and thou to him."[1]

But what if this self-examination, this soul searching, fail to reveal God as our God? Then admonishes Sibbes, "let us never rest till we make it good that God is our God."[2] Gou to God and plead his covenant. A man should not stop until he is certain and has full assurance of his state. Every man is urged to prove himself to be in covenant.

> "Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Take up and practise the duties of religion, that are contrary to the corruption of nature and contrary to the times."[3]

It is sound practical advice that Richard Sibbes offers those wailing

> "OH that I had assurance of my salvation! Oh that I were the child of God! Why, man, fall to obedience. Ay, but I cannot; for it is the Spirit that enables. But yet come to holy exercises, though we have not the Spirit; for many times in the midst of holy exercises God gives the Spirit; and therefore attend upon the means until we have the strength to obey. Wait upon God's ordinances till he stirs in thy soul. All that love your souls, attend upon the means, and have a care to sanctify the Lord's day: Rev. i.10."[4]

Away with disputing and doubting Sibbes tells his readers and "fall to obey." Do your duty; "put this question out of question, by beleeving and obeying."[5] Ask yourself

> "Art thou a good and usefull man, doest thou goe about doing good, doe those fare the better for thee, with whom thou hast to do, doest thou spend the fatnesse, and the sweetnesse that God hath given thee, to serve God and man with it? then

---

[1] Preston, Breast Plate, p.251.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., IV. p.16; also Preston, op. cit., p.249.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.233.
[4] ibid., VII. p.209.
[5] ibid., V. p.403 and Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, p.334.

> conclude, thou art in the ranke of those that are in the Lords portion, otherwise thou art yet without the Covenant."[1]

If a man cannot thus act and obey, then he has not been sought by God. Yet if such a man remains patient, attends the preaching of God's Word regularly, and waits expectantly for God to act, God may "stir" his soul.

> "Hee that will not resist the motions and exhortations, that the Word and Spirit of God doe raise vp within him, shall surely be visited from on high, and shall have the Spirit of God descending vpon him, to make him a new creature."[2]

Yet it must be remembered that God "doth purposely with-hold assurance often to teach men, what it is to bee reconciled to him," and so they will more carefully purge themselves.[3] Doubt as to whether or not one is in covenant is interpreted as a healthy sign of evidence of a struggle taking place within a man. In fact, Perkins maintains, "Hee which neuer doubted of his salvation, neuer believed."[4] Times of temptation and the early stages of grace are particular periods when men "stagger" in their assurance. At such times, one's covenant and purposes should be renewed. And if a man think himself unworthy of God, he is to remember to whom the promises in the Gospel are made: to "the thirstie, wearie, laden, and burthened, to them that be stung in conscience, parched in sinne, that have neither sap nor fruit of grace."[5]

It is in light of such doctrine that Sibbes advises "It is not my duty to look to God's secret counsel, but to his open offer, invitation and command, and thereupon to adventure my soul."[1] "It is my duty...to believe, by doing whereof, I put out that question whether God be mine or no out of all question." Not by flights of speculative fancy but by sound ethical living will a man discover whether or not he is in covenant. He should undertake a "spiritual adventure" and cast himself upon God. When he can "without hypocrisy say, My God, it engageth us to universal and unlimited obedience."[2]

---

[1] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.513.
[2] Whately, op. cit., p.117.
[3] Preston, Golden Scepter, I.39; cf. also Nevv Covenant, p.400.
[4] Perkins, Works, I. p.410.
[5] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.153.

But how can a person be sure of his state so that he be not deceived? What is this having God as our God?

> "My beloued, it is a thing that we cannot expresse, it is a certaine dimme expression of light, a certain vnexpressible assurance that we are the sonnes of God, a certaine secret manifestation, that God hath receiued vs, and put away our sinnes; I say, it is such a thing, that no man knows but they that haue it."[3]

He who lives unto God in faith and obedience is sure he is God's.[4] Such in substance is the advice the covenant preachers gave Christians for their assurance.

This interpretation of God's election and of his covenant led William Perkins to affirm "no man may preemptorily set down, that himselfe, or any other is a Reprobate."[5] A man whose faith is weak need not despair, but

> "let him rather vse the word of God, & the sacraments, that we may haue an inward sēse of the power of Christ, drawing him vnto him, & an assurāce of his redemption by Christs death & passion."[6]

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, I. p.266.
[2] ibid., I. p.268.
[3] Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.400-401.
[4] Cf. Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.319. Also Goodwin, Works, IX. p.25.
[5] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.115. Also Hooker, Covenant of Grace Opened, (1649) p.20.
[6] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.115.

Perkins criticizes the "racke or gybbet" erected by the church of Rome for the "tormenting of tender consciences". Papists offer a "comfortlesse" doctrine that a man in this life must always doubt of his salvation. According to Perkins, for a man to doubt his salvation is to question God's love and mercy to him.[1] "Every member of the Church is bound to beleeue his owne election;"[2] "every faithful man must beleeue that he is elected."[3] Perkins sets forth proof of a man's election by the following propositions:

> "They which truly beleeue are elected, Ioh. 6:35. I truly beleeue; for he which beleeueth doth know himselfe to beleeue: therefore I am elected. The first proposition is taken from the Scriptures: the second, from the beleeuers conscience, & from them both, the conclusion is easily deriued."[4]

A man can have assurance of his election and of his being in covenant with God. And he who has some assurance must labor for further assurance, never ceasing to improve upon his state of grace. Covenant doctrine offered a believer assurance of his salvation at the same time it encouraged persistent spiritual activity.[5]

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.397.
[2] ibid., I. p.296.
[3] ibid., I. p.106.
[4] ibid.
[5] As Thomas Goodwin put it (Works, III. p.417) "The doctrine of assurance, if not abused, and of God speaking peace to men, is no dangerous doctrine to make men secure and presumptious in sinning."

Chapter IV.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE THEOLOGICAL COVENANT

The idea of covenant in theology as found in the writings of various English Puritans in the reigns of Elizabeth and the early Stuarts was described in the preceding chapter with little attempt at interpretation. In general there is a striking uniformity in the conception of covenant doctrine which these men present. As already noted, there was really no fundamental disagreement about the covenant. In a day of heated religious controversies there is surprisingly no evidence of any attack upon the covenant idea either from within Puritan ranks or from outside. The conclusion therefore seems justified that the application of the covenant to theology must have received general approval.

For the most part the differences which do appear in covenant thinking stem from variations in the extent of acceptance and application of the idea rather than from basically divergent points of view. Certainly all English covenant writers did not give equal prominence to the theory. Only some, for example, elaborated upon God's two covenants, and all did not emphasize equally the historical or social aspects of the theory. Yet all did agree upon the idea of a covenant between God and man by which man is saved.

There was, however, different emphases as to the central idea of the covenant. William Perkins, for example, thought the covenant a "compact made betweene God and man touching reconciliation and life euerlasting by Christ."[1] A similar view was voiced by Richard Greenham. Robert Browne regarded it as the means by which men are brought once again under the government of God; so did William Ames. While John

---

1.Perkins,Wm., Works, I. p.167.

Preston and Richard Sibbes sometimes speak of the covenant involving subjection to God as King and to his rule,[1] they highlight the covenant as the means whereby man through the great mercy of God can be assured of his salvation. Ball, Davenport, Hooker, T. Goodwin, and Cotton all more or less laid stress upon this same interpretation. Crisp defined the covenant as "nothing but God's love to man."[2] While the vocabulary is similar and there is a common idea of reconciliation and salvation running through these definitions, there does seem to be a discernible change of emphasis between some of the earlier covenant preachers, Perkins, Greenham, and Ames, and later writers like Sibbes, Preston, Goodwin, and Ball. The outlook of these latter men tended away from emphasizing the sovereignty and rule of God to stressing God's faithfulness, his reasonableness, and his mercy to men.

It is not that Sibbes, Preston, Goodwin, and others introduce a new element as that they place their emphasis at a different point. They do not deny the doctrine of God's sovereignty and providence; they simply choose not to dwell upon it, but rather to urge men to make their salvation sure. Whereas Perkins and Ames interpret the covenant in light of God's designs in relation to the whole creation, these later writers were interested almost exclusively in God's plans regarding his elect.

?

Put in another way there is more emphasis upon God's decrees in Perkins, while Sibbes speaks more of God's gracious covenant. The Calvinism for which Perkins was renowned was a more impersonal and arbitrary doctrine than the Calvinism of a Sibbes who emphasized the comforting doctrine of the salvation of the individual believer. Not the providence of God and his glory but the salvation of man was made the center of interest and concern. Both such emphases were consistent with Calvinism, since they stressed two aspects of that theology — the majesty and power of God and the mercy of God toward his chosen people.

---

[1] Preston, *Saints Qualification*, p.558; Sibbes, *Works*, VII. p.351.
[2] Crisp, Tobias, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643) I, p.165.

One evidence of a shift in emphasis is the absence of a forthright affirmation of the doctrine of double predestination among the later covenant writers. The theory of election and reprobation as God's decree is plainly stated by Perkins.[1] It is also affirmed by Ames.[2] But when the writings of Sibbes, Preston, Ball, Hooker, Cotton, or T. Goodwin are examined the doctrine of reprobation is passed over or merely inferred. These men faithfully give voice to the doctrine of election, but they minimized the doctrine of reprobation.[3] The minor attention devoted to this doctrine among seventeenth century covenant preachers is so general and so marked that it must be regarded as a characteristic of covenant theology. The result in effect was to emphasize God's mercy more than his justice. A preacher like Sibbes would agree with Perkins that God's very nature "is not iustice alone or mercie alone, but iustice and mercie both together."[4] And yet the overtones of overlooking the theory of reprobation was to soften the judgments of God while stressing his graciousness and love.

---

[1] Perkins, op. cit., I. pp.17,24.
[2] Ames, Wm., Marrow of Sacred Divinity, p.108.
[3] Thomas Goodwin's son, for instance, in his preface to Goodwin's "An Exposition of Revelation" spoke of his father as one who was "very tender in the point of reprobation." (Goodwin,T., Works, III.p.xxx)
[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.284; Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.267.

These men evidently felt double predestination involved too mechanistic a view which did not fit the mood of the new century. Besides they were men interested in the practical application of predestination. They did not discuss the theory in the abstract but rather as it referred to particular persons. Hence reprobation was not of major concern.

As a matter of fact, the doctrine of covenant, as it developed and matured, tended to replace the doctrine of predestination in expositions on religious living. Covenant preachers were not so much concerned with the question of God's election as with whether a man was in God's covenant. They discussed not God's predestinating and electing but God's covenanting. It is through the covenant that God reveals his purposes toward men. The covenant comes to overshadow predestination as the way God effects the salvation of men. To be sure the idea of God's predestination is always inferred, and the idea of covenant is clearly rooted in God's election, yet the tendency was to substitute the act of covenant for the decree of predestination as the explanation of man's salvation. It is through his gracious covenant rather than his decrees that men become acquainted with God. Good things are conveyed to God's people "not barely by common providence, but by Spirituall Couenant."[1] The covenant came to be the concept which revealed and explained all theology. For Thomas Goodwin it "contains the whole design of God, both of creation, and the instauration of the creature in Christ, and redemption and whatever else."[2]

---

[1] Bulkeley, P., The Gospel-Covenant, "To the Reader". Likewise Preston writes, "There is a great deale of difference betweene having blessing through the providence of God, and betweene having them from the mercy of God." (The Saints Daily Exercise, (1635) p.47)

[2] Goodwin, T., op. cit., I. pp.175-6.

This being the case it is worth probing some of the implications of the covenant for the ideas of God, man, salvation, use of the Scriptures, morality, and the interpretation of history.

The Covenant Interpretation of God.

Covenant writers devoted little attention to describing the characteristics and attributes of God. More formal theological works, such as Ames' Marrow of Sacred Divinity or some of Perkins' treatises, include a section devoted to the nature of the deity, but this was not a subject for sermons. Actually general warnings were issued against probing into God's essence since no man could apprehend what God is.[1] Fundamentally these Puritan preachers were not so much concerned about the abstract qualities of God as with his purposes and works. They did not talk about God as much as about what God did. For them it was more important to know the will of God than to understand the nature and providence of God.[2] Perkins affirmed that theology has two parts: of God and of his works.[3] Clearly it is the second part upon which he and others focused their sermons and treatises. Their prime concern was not God's being but his activities and his promises. Moreover, if God's work be divided into his decrees and the execution of his decrees,[4] then again covenant writers were most concerned with the latter. They were interested in interpreting the ways by which God intended to bring his designs to fruition. They believed the covenant best explained God's intent toward mankind. As Bulkeley put it, "in Gods Covenant and promise we see with open face Gods secret purpose for time past... Gods promises in the Covenant being nothing else but his purposes revealed."[1]

---

[1] God in and of himself was held to be unknown and unknowable, yet, says Ames, "that which is revealed of God is sufficient for us, that we may live well."(Marrow, p.9) The presupposition that God is unknowable did not hinder the listing of divine attributes. Perkins terms God most holy, most wise, most just and merciful, eternal, infinite. (Works, I. p.3). Preston attributes to him perfection, without all causes, eternal, Spirit, Immutable, Greatness, Immensity, Omnipotent. (Life Eternall, first section). Ames says God is one, of himself, unchangeable, living, Infinite, Spirit, incomprehensible, eternal, immeasurable. (Marrow, p.12)

[2] Cf. Sibbes, Works, I. p.212.

[3] Perkins, Works, I. p.11. Ames defines divinity as "the doctrine of living to God" (Marrow, p.1) thus also proposing the very practical concern of theology.

[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.15.

Most frequently God in his relations with men was characterized as a King to his subjects,[2] or as a Father to his sons.[3] These two divine roles had special meaning for covenant theology: God as a Governor, a Judge, a King, a Sovereign, a Master; and God as a loving Father, a Friend. By covenant a man came under God's Kingdom and into God's Family. In one sense, therefore, the covenant expressed the relationship of sovereign and subjects; in another way that of father and sons. These two aspects of God's nature are manifest in his power and in his goodness, in his justice and in his mercy. They form, according to Sibbes, "two pillars of the Christian faith."[4] Man enters "a Covenant of service" to submit to God and be ruled by him, and he enters "a covenant of friendship." Man in covenant owes God subjection, and for man to rebel is to sin against God's majesty. At the same time man in covenant becomes God's son and friend.[5] To emphasize the rule of God leads to thinking of the covenant as bringing man under God's government, while the idea of friendship makes the covenant a means of reconciliation between enemies. The two are not mutually exclusive. There is nothing incongruous in being in God's family and being under God's government at the same time. To be a member of a family involves being under the government of that family. Therefore, to speak of God in the covenant as Father means to be under his rule. For this is not a government of a tyrant or despot but a government involving consent on the part of the governed. And God's mercy offering friendship is such as seeks man in his responsibility.

---

[1] Bulkeley, op. cit., "To the Reader."

[2] Cf. Perkins, op. cit., I. p.264; Preston, Saints Qualification, p.558; Taylor, Works, p.476; Goodwin, op. cit., II. p.222; Bulkeley, op. cit., pp.45,150.

[3] Cf. Greenham, Works, pp.589,598; Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, pp.106,342 & Works, V. p.180; Preston, Life Eternall, II. p.88; Goodwin, op. cit., I. p.35; Playfere, Sermons, I.17; Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.200.

[4] Sibbes, Works, I. p.413.

[5] Cf. Playfere, Sermons, V.221.

As has already been indicated, the later covenant Puritans stressed the idea of covenant as a relation of a family, of friendship, more than of a political order and government. This latter aspect is not altogether forgotten, but it became secondary. Sibbes, for instance, points out how Abraham was called "God's friend" and the disciples "Christ's friends," and concludes "we enter into terms of friendship with God in the covenant of grace."[1] And yet because this seemed so audacious a claim to make of a relationship between the sovereign God and corrupt man, it was usually also explained that this is a friendship of unequals.[2] God does not covenant with men as his equals, but as their superior. Yet since friendship was generally regarded a relationship between equals, the very use of the phrase "covenant of friendship" indicates a new status for man within the covenant. Preston even says the covenant implies "a kinde of equality;"[1] men become "the confederates of God."[2] In the covenant God lifts man to a kind of equality with himself by making man a partner.

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, VII. p.482. Ball speaks of God and man being joined in a "firme and stable covenant of friendship and reconciliation." (Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.265)

[2] Sibbes, op. cit., II. p.37; V. p.15; VII. p.482. Also Ames, Marrow, p.45 and Ball, op. cit., pp.7,18. Ames and Ball try to differentiate this as a "covenant of reconciliation between enemies" in contrast to the first covenant which was a "covenant of friendship" (cf. Marrow, p.101) but the inference is this is reconciliation leading to friendship.

Furthermore, though God be the superior, "he makes this covenant as to sonnes, and not as to servants."[3] In the covenant, says Sibbes, "all comes from God as Father."[4] It is God the Father of all mercies rather than God the Lord and Master who dominates covenant thinking. The central message of the covenant is God's loving kindness. It is God's nature "to shew mercy as the fire to burn, a spring to run, the sun to shine."[5] The covenant, as its very name states, is a covenant of mercy, having replaced that first covenant which was a covenant of justice requiring strict obedience to the commandments of God. But God is indeed most merciful, for out of his own loving kindness did he bind himself in a covenant with man.

Besides God's mercy his faithfulness is a second important characteristic of God. God's great mercy is evident in his choosing to be reconciled to man by way of a covenant; it is a sign of God's faithfulness that he abides by his covenant and makes good his promises in spite of man's erring ways. "We could never have known God's faithfulnesse and truth," writes Bulkeley, "if he had not entred into Covenant with us."[6] He could have manifested his power or his mercy or his goodness without any covenant but not his faithfulness. The covenant thus reveals God's dependability and the sureness of his ways. It may seem strange that so much attention is given to illustrating and proving that God makes good his promises. In fact, it is pointed out that God has not only promised to make good his covenant, but he has taken an oath to that end; not only has he sworn but he has sealed his promise with the blood of his Son.[1] God does not take the covenant lightly; he has bound himself to keep it. He can no more deny his promises than cease to be God.[2] God cannot lie.[3] He cannot change; he is no covenant-breaker. He has sworn to make good his covenant and his word is everlasting. Man can be sure that God's promises will be fulfilled.

---

[1] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.331. Cf. Sibbes, Works, II.p.269;IV. p.215.

[2] Ball, op. cit., p.346. Sometimes the covenant is likened to a covenant of marriage, and yet the relation of husband and wife is such that the "power of the husband is moderated with a certaine equality." (Ames, Marrow, p.313)

[3] Preston, Life Eternall, II. p.88; cf. Nevv Covenant, pp.425,462,483.

[4] Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, pp.106,342; also Works, V. p.180.

[5] Sibbes, Works, II. p.274.

[6] Bulkeley, op. cit., pp.26-27.

That God is both merciful and faithful is a reassuring and comforting doctrine to man estranged and wretched in his separation from God. "It is a sweet thing that the Lord hath bound himselfe by Oath to us, to keepe Covenant with us."[4] The underlying assumption provoking these assurances is that "men naturally have hard and suspicious thoughts" of God,[5] and therefore, as Goodwin affirms, "the great business" of the preacher is "to persuade men of God's good will." Men are loath to believe that the promises of God are true and can be depended upon. Therefore, it becomes necessary to speak not only of God's goodness to make promises, but also to assert that God's promises are sure and that God cannot fail.[6]

1.Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.367-8; cf. Taylor,T., Works, p.188.
2.Sibbes, Works, I. p.lxxxxii.
3.Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.4; Bulkeley, op. cit., p.28.
4.Hooker, The Faithful Covenanter, p.22.
5.Goodwin, T., Works, IV. p.208.
6.Hooker, The Soules Vocation (1638) p.84.

In the third place, the God of the covenant is an intensely personal God. He speaks to the individual soul. He relates himself directly to men; through the mediation of Christ, to be sure, but significantly not through ceremonies, ritual, works, or an ecclesiastical hierarchy. This is a covenant of persons; "it is pitched upon the person, simply as such."[1] God loves us; he accepts the person, not his works or his abilities, but himself.[2] God is not simply merciful and faithful; he is our God and we are his people.[3] It is not sufficient, writes Perkins, to be able to say God is merciful; we must labor to be able to say "God is indeed mercifull to vs."[4] The covenant enables a soul to say "God is my God." In contrast the man of the world is "forced to speak of God as of the God of another people."[5] Until God is our God we can expect naught from him.[6] Is this not presumption to claim God as our God? No, replies Sibbes, for "God hath made himself ours."[7] "All his glory, power, wisdome, goodness, grace, holinesse, mercy, kindnesse, all is ours."[8] In the covenant God is not simply God afar off, but a God upon whom we can lay claim.

As the initiator of the covenant, God is desirous to relate himself to men. It is he who seeks man to covenant with him. Sometimes he is portrayed as pleading and bargaining with men. This seeming incongruity served to heighten the wonder of God's ways rather than to degrade him. God out of his goodness has chosen not to leave all men to their miserable and wretched state; he not only instituted a covenant of salvation, but he engages to sue and negotiate with men to enter into the covenant.[1] He actively seeks to bring about an agreement between himself and fallen man in which he promises certain things if man will in turn undertake certain duties. God is active in seeking men to enter into covenant with him. That the sovereign majesty of God should "stoop so low"[2] as to deal with men in this manner of a market transaction of give and take is a matter of great thanksgiving. That God himself undertakes man's part of the bargain as well as his own hardly minimizes the inference that God bargains and deals with men in the manner of commerce. For though God has promised, he likes to have his promise called to his attention and to have people beg him to make his promise good. People are encouraged to come to the throne of grace, for God "delights to be overcome by the pleas of his people."[3] This is indeed a strange picture of God bargaining with and holding off men from the completion of their salvation.

---

[1] Goodwin, T., Works, II. p.151.
[2] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.70.
[3] ibid., pp.125,344; Sibbes, Works, I. p.368.
[4] Perkins, Works, I. p.289.
[5] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.129.
[6] Gataker, "A Marriage Prayer" in Sermons, p.124.
[7] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.186.
[8] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.123.

Moreover, God is a moral being who binds himself by the covenant. By entering covenant he has imposed limits upon his power and actions. The sovereign God has tied himself to man. The covenant not only binds man to God, but being mutual it binds God to man.[4] However, God is not bound by the covenant through any limitation imposed by man but only so far as he himself has determined; he voluntarily choose to deal with men by way of covenant. Yet once having sworn to covenant

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, III. p.394; also VII. p.380.
[2] ibid., VII. p.482.
[3] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.170.
[4] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.330.

God has not only narrowed his potential ways of acting but he has made promises which he is bound to perform. He, "the great God hath ingaged himselfe as a debtor to his poore creature for all things needfull to life and godlinesse."[1] This is something more than a negative self-limitation; it is the positive limitation arising from God in the covenant binding himself to men to undertake certain things. He bound himself to man first before he bound man to himself.[2] The God of the covenant is a predictable deity whose ways are sure and whose promises will be made good.

Of course, none of these Puritan writers discusses the question of God's limitation. All explicit questions as to the nature of God affirm his absolute characteristics. Yet implied in the theory of God's covenant is a denial of the absolute majesty and freedom of God. The effect of covenant thinking was to eliminate arbitrariness and capriousness in God's actions by presenting a God utterly reasonable and orderly in his dealings with men. He is not willful or capricious but judicious and merciful. He is not a King in the sense of an oriental despot but as one who rules according to his laws and revealed ways. He is a governor, not a tyrant.[3] Men are encouraged to rely upon God's acting in a specified way.

The idea of covenant generally was a medium defining and limiting power, as is most clearly evident in its application to social relationships. To apply this theory to God therefore would logically infer an attempt to qualify God's sovereignty. Covenant defended and protected men from any actual or potential tyranny of God's power. Man is relieved from the fear of God's overpowering or arbitrary acts. In the covenant God has revealed himself as a Ruler and Father whose ways are reasonable and known to all who become acquainted with his revealed Word. Besides, he can be counted upon to abide by those ways. God remains absolute and all-powerful in English covenant theology, but for all practical purposes he has tied himself to a prescribed pattern through which he is revealed as a reasonable and predictable being in his relations to man. Perkins may maintain that God is an absolute Lord and Law-giver who "is aboue all his lawes and not bound to them,"[1] and "who may even command that which his law forbiddeth,"[2] yet this same God "is also a father, and therefore is willing to doe that which is for our good."[3]

---

[1] Sibbes, preface to Ball, A Treatise of Faith.
[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.348.
[3] Harris, R., New Covenant (1632) p.35,36.

Through each of these various aspects of God's nature and actions emphasized in covenant thinking runs the common thread of concern to give man a feeling of assurance. Underlying their interest in portraying God as a merciful Father, as sure and dependable, as concerned with persons, and as willingly binding himself to man by a covenant, the Puritan covenant preachers were interested in showing what a comfortable doctrine this is. These very characteristics of the divine provide "a ground of strong consolation," revealing God's good intent toward sinners. That God should deal with men by way of covenant with all that that implies, is indeed a point of great comfort. For the covenant is not a commandment but a promise. It is not a decree to be observed but a promise of what God will do which is to be believed.[4] The covenant writers did all they could to ease men's fears by pointing to the reasonableness and mercy of God and his deep concern for man's well-being. What greater assurance could man have than to be told "we have the Lord in bonds for the fulfilling his part of the Covenant."[1] God as the author of all punishments and judgments can no longer terrify since God has bound himself to man and he "can not goe back."[2]

---

[1] Perkins, Works, I. p.163.
[2] ibid., I. p.32.
[3] ibid., I. p.142.
[4] Preston, op. cit., pp.364-5; Sibbes, Works., VII. p.112.

Man as Viewed in Covenant Theology

The covenant view of man had far greater implications than its interpretation of God. Basically the center of covenant theology was man and his salvation rather than God. Just as the idea of covenant tended to qualify the sovereignty of God, it made for a heightened sense of man's importance. This increased measure of man is found more by indirection than in express argument, but it represented the temper of covenant thinking. Covenant theology took its point of departure from man's despair and man's need rather than from God's providence. Its orientation, therefore, was anthropological. It interpreted God acting in response to man's predicament, and man acting in response to God's grace.

The picture of man which covenant thinking presents is on the surface a rather paradoxical one. The premise of these English Puritans is that man is corrupt, depraved, unable to do anything good or to move from his condition of sin.[3] Yet in spite of man's depravity, which was described in rich Augustinian style, covenant writers insisted upon speaking of man having freedom to accept the covenant which God offers. How it is possible for a man both to be in bondage to Satan, as natural man is said to be as a result of Adam's sin, and yet be free to covenant with God is not always clearly explained.[1] The contradiction would be sharp were it not recalled that for these men corrupt man is still a very lofty being and a creature who can covenant with God.

---

[1] Hooker, Faithful Covenanter, p.22.
[2] ibid., p.5 and Hooker, Soules Vocation, p.83.
[3] Cf. Preston, Saints Qualification, p.474 as example.

Man after the fall is represented as still having his reason, some remainder of the moral law written in him at creation, and some measure of freedom — although not freedom to do good.[2] Had God not been able to deal with "reasonable creatures" he could not have dealt with them by covenant.[3] God's government is indeed a reasonable government which appeals to man's understanding. God "workes in us, *In modo intelligentium*. He uses us in the worke and he useth us after the manner of men."[4] By his reason man acknowledges the mercy and benefits of God's ways, and consequently great stress is placed upon the importance of preaching the Word and upon man's hearing the Word preached.

Man is also considered a voluntary agent. He gives his consent to entering into relations. God in establishing the covenant does not force it upon man; man must accept it freely by an act of will. A man may not be able to make himself a new heart but "he must *concur* to it."[5] Only free men can engage in a covenant, for a covenant is not considered binding unless it is voluntarily assumed. Thus, despite all of his sin and corruption, none of which is denied, man must be free to covenant with God. The inference is patent that man is not simply a passive inert creature in a predetermined universe in which necessity reigns. By the covenant man is raised from a role of passive acceptance of the decrees of God to that of a creature whose consent is necessary in order that God's plans may be fulfilled. Man achieves a sense of dignity and standing even in the presence of God. He is a responsible creature with whom God deals in a reasonable rather than an arbitrary fashion.

---

[1] Cf. Sibbes, *op. cit.*, I. p.414; *Saints Cordiall*, p.363; also Scudder, *A Christians Daily Walke*, p.456.

[2] Perkins, *Works*, III. pp.484,495,33.

[3] Ames, *Marrow*, p.45; Ball, *Treatise of Covenant of Grace*, p.6.

[4] Preston, *Saints Qualification*, p.459.

[5] Harris, *op. cit.*, p.5.

Among confessed Calvinists such doctrine sounds like outright heresy. Did these preachers really mean what they said? Does man cooperate with God in effecting his own salvation? Is man able to circumvent God's enabling grace? The answer must be a clear "no." Again and again covenant Puritans maintain that God alone offers and establishes the covenant,[1] and yet the general spirit of their writings gives a different impression. An explanation of such seeming incongruities must lie in the intracacies of the doctrine they set forth. These men are concerned to describe man's relation to God. One of the problems with which they are wrestling is how to combine a recognition of the sovereignty of God with the moral and social responsibility of man. They are feeling after an interpretation which will give room to man's will and actions without overthrowing the fundamental principles of God's ruling power and grace. They found an answer in the idea of covenant. The covenant made room for the governing providence of God at the same time it enables man to feel a sense of significance in furthering God's plans. God's sovereignty is primary, but in the covenant it is more than ever a reasonable sovereignty, and considerable attention is devoted to urging man to reform and to engage in a covenant with God.

---

[1] As example note Goodwin, T., Works, IX. p.71.

The result is that two concurrent but somewhat divergent strains run through most covenant writing. It is maintained, for example, that man since Adam has no claim upon God and his covenant,[1] for man merits punishment and not happiness. That man is indebted to God is readily agreed, but for God to be obligated to man would imply an equality which does not exist.[2] Man is not owed nor does he merit anything from God.[3] God's grace and God's covenant are altogether freely given. God chooses whom he will to enter into covenant with him, and men are only in the covenant of grace because God elected them to covenant with him.

And yet at the same time it is affirmed that man does have a claim upon God. Man is advised to examine himself to determine whether he is in covenant with God. If he finds he is not, he is urged not to linger in doubt or in misery, but to go straitway to God and to demand that God make good his covenant and his promises to him. Men are encouraged to search their souls periodically with diligence to discover signs of God's election, and if these evidences are missing, to lay claim to them from God. They are to plead with God and ask "why are thy mercies restrained from me? where is thy faithfulnesse? why dost not thou pardon mine inequitie?...remember thy Covenant, make good thy promise."[4] Here man is represented as making requests of God in the spirit of one demanding his due. This is a far cry from the creature sunk in the mire of perdition through Adam's sin; in contrast it is a picture of a creature confronting God with making good what God has promised.

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.45

[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.18

[3] Preston, Life Eternall, pp.125-126.

[4] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.170.

Not only is this true, but some writers so interpret the covenant as to hold man responsible for whether or not he is in covenant with God.[1] If he is not in covenant, it is due to his own perverseness.[2] This argument encourages a man to feel that his salvation does indeed depend upon himself, even though the primary tenet of this theology places not only the initial but the sustaining power of salvation in God.[3]

Fundamentally these covenant advocates are Calvinists. They do not raise man to quite the lordly heights that may at first appear. The explanation lies in their belief that at the same time God agrees to enter into covenant with a man he bestows upon that man the grace to enable him to fulfill the conditions of the covenant. These conditions are believing, repenting, and serving God, but the ability to perform these, and even the very act of willing and doing, is part of the covenant on God's part.[4] Though God requires conditions in the covenant, he works those conditions in man.[5] He who is in covenant is there because God has enabled him to covenant. Therefore, conditions in the customary sense do not exist in this covenant for God undertakes to do for both parties. As Ames wrote,

---

[1] Cf. Sibbes, Works, V. p.391.

[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.244; Whately, Nevv-Birth, p.116.

[3] In face of the repeated claim that God only covenants with men out of his own free will it is a little surprising to find Preston saying "that which moves him is alway either grace or sinne; as that which moves him to do us good is our obedience of him, and that which moves him to the contrary is neglect on our part." (Saints Daily Exercise, p.54)

[4] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.389; Sibbes, Works, V. p.15; Adams, Works, III. p.205; Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.273; Cotton, Covenant of God's Free Grace (1645), preface.

[5] Hooker, The Soules Vocation, p.40.

> "this requires not any condition properly so called, or going before, but only following after or coming betweene, and that to be communicated by grace."[1]

Thus the exhortations to enter the covenant are essentially exhortations to men who have already been brought into covenant by God that they give their consent to it. Man's consenting "that God is our God in Christ, is not the first act of Faith, but an act flowing from Faith."[2] Faith and obedience are the "effect (not the cause) of our election;"[3] the only cause is "the good pleasure of God." It is in this context that Robert Harris can write,

> "True it is that man cannot make himself a new heart; but it is true also, that although hee concurre not as a cause or agent in this work, yet must he concurre as a subject capable of being renewed."[4]

Sibbes states the situation even more clearly:

> "as soon as a stock of grace is given, presently thy will must work, and thou must say, Lord, come in; he knocks as soon as thou hast grace, he enables thee to give a will, that thou mayest open. Though principally God, yet there is a concurrence between God and thee; and this is grace, when thy will is made active and able to do things that now the things done by God's grace are attributed to men."[5]

Justification is clearly the sole work of God, but men "concurre" in the grace bestowed upon them. Man acts in proportion to the grace he receives, and therefore, men are urged to "use" their faith, since God "doth not worke in you only but by you."[1]

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.102. Ball prefers to emphasize that this covenant does not exclude all conditions "but such as will not stand with grace." (Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.17) He distinguishes between "antecedent" and "consequent" conditions, and says the latter belongs to the covenant of grace; (ibid., p.133) "obedience was not a causall condition" but consequent. (p.142)

[2] Ames, Marrow, p.7.

[3] Ainsworth, A Seasonable Discourse (1644) p.13)

[4] Harris, op. cit., p.5

[5] Sibbes, Works, VII. p.510.

Ames flatly rejects as "most false" the idea "that our hope is ground partly upon the grace of God, and partly our own merits." Rather, "it may be most truly affirmed, that hope is strengthened, increased and stirred up, by Faith, repentance, workes, and a good conscience."[2] But we only love God because he first loved us. Faith, Sibbes says, "is nothing else but a spiritual echo, returning that voice back again, which God first speaks to the soul."[3] Faith is both the gift of God and the act of man.

> "It is man that beleeveth, but it is God only and altogether that enableth, stirreth vp, putteth forward, and enclineth the heart to beleeve."[4]

It thus appears that many of the affirmations of covenant preachers are misleading, or else their sermons and treatises were 7. intended only for God's elect. For John Ball to declare that God will not withhold grace from wicked men truly seeking it,[5] or for Perkins to say that a man who truly desired grace shall have it,[6] is confusing to say the least. Because actually no man is able to desire grace without already having God's grace. And yet Ames can write on one page, "if we will make our calling and the condition of our salvation sure, then labour especially to obtain faith and also to in-

---

1. Preston, Breast-Plate, p.239.
2. Ames, Marrow, p.230.
3. Sibbes, Works, V. p.284. In Henry Whitfield's word, "First indeed God speaks to the soules of men, Thou art my people; and then they lay hold on him saying, And the Lord is my God." (Some Helpes to Stirre up to Christian Dvties (1634) pp.142-3.
4. Ball, Treatise of Faith, pp.11, 12.
5. Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.247.
6. Perkins, Works, I. p.411.

crease it more and more,"[1] while on the next he asserts "the cause of this precious faith is not in any man, but in the righteousnesse of God and Christ."

Such statements are commonly encountered in these writings describing God's covenant. "Continue knocking," writes Preston, "and the Lord will give you the Holy Ghost;" "bee earnest with God and hee cannot deny thee."[2] Said Richard Sibbes: "God will give grace to fulfill the covenant, if we beg it."[3] To undertake Taylor's advice to "labor for faith,"[4] seems superfluous when faith is clearly the gift of God. It is impossible that any man should have it by striving for it. Any man able to choose God gives evidence that he is in God's favor and is God's elect. "If we choose him, we may conclude he hath chosen us first."[5] Our being able to love God is an argument of God's love of us.[6] Covenant theology does not maintain that man can get faith or can increase faith in and of himself, but it does assert that every man saved by God's grace must respond to and use the grace God gives him. True faith is "an applying faith,"[7] and any man who has even a little should "improve and husband it," blowing up "the good sparks" in him.[8] Faith will decay "unlesse it be carefully stirred up, preserved, and exercised."[9]

It is God who enables men to enter into covenant, but man must voluntarily accept the covenant. It is in this sense that man is regarded free to covenant.[1] Sibbes explains this in these terms:

---

[1] Ames, "Second Epistle to Peter" in *Works*, pp.129,130.
[2] Preston, *Golden Scepter*, I. p.51.
[3] Sibbes, *Works*, III. p.415.
[4] Taylor, *Works*, p.105; cf. also Sibbes, *op. cit.*, V. pp.88,100.
[5] Sibbes, *op. cit.*, I. p.268; also V. p.88.
[6] Gataker, *Sermons*, p.247.
[7] Sibbes, *op. cit.*, V. p.391; cf. also I. p.264.
[8] Preston, *Saints Qualification*, p.459.
[9] Ball, *Short Treatise*, p.218.

> "if you look to God the Father, we are Christ's by donation, if you regard Christ by himself, we are his by purchase...if we regard ourselves, we are his by voluntary acceptance of the covenant of grace, and by contract passed between him and us.."[2]

While each of these three ways of regarding salvation were mentioned by covenant preachers, their great interest was in setting forth the viewpoint of man who enters the covenant freely. This interpretation does not leave man dependent upon his freedom as was true in the first covenant made with Adam. It asserts man's continued dependence upon God and his state of misery outside the covenant relation, yet at the same time it places upon man the responsibility of concurring in and accepting God's covenant. It was able both to satisfy the orthodox theological view that man can only be called and saved by God's grace freely given to whom God will, and also to satisfy a demand of the times that man must give his consent in God's work.

The covenant is a mutual agreement which requires consent on both sides. There must not only be the party making the covenant, but a party that answers. There could be no covenant with God unless man responds to the promises God makes. Such an answer "only God's elect children have,"[3] and therefore only the faithful can covenant with God. No man can make an answer by his own strength, for there is no good in him. He is a "meere patient;" "meerly passive in respect of the beginning."[4] This is a covenant of grace, and man's part as well as God's are of grace. "It is ourselves that answer, but not from ourselves, but from grace."[1] Before man can seek God, God must find man.[2] "None so seek but such as by effectual vocation are found of God before."[3] At the same time that God commands man to seek him and covenant with him he works his spirit in those he has chosen.

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, I. p.414; also Saints Cordiall, p.263.
[2] ibid., V. p.308.
[3] ibid., VII, p.482.
[4] Ainsworth, The Orthodox Foundation of Religion (1641) p.61; also Whately, Wm., The Nevv Birth, p.117.

It is thus that man can be considered a "co-worker" with God.[4] Covenant theology, for all its assumptions of God's predestination led man to believe that he is something more than a mere automaton upon whom salvation is worked. He is assigned a position in which he works with God by God's grace.[5] The chief significance of English covenant theology was not the emphasis placed upon God's mercy and love, nor even the way in which God binds himself to man by a covenant, but rather its stress upon the necessary expression of man's will to effect his covenant with God. Granted this consent only comes from a man in whom God has created a new heart, yet the clear inference is the recognition of man's will in forwarding his life in the covenant.

This meant that every man claiming God's covenant is led to feel that only because he voluntarily accepted God's promise and covenant is he now in God's favor. For a covenant preacher, like Preston, to affirm that man must accept the covenant in order to make it binding,[6] is to give a role to man's will which marks a new trend when compared to the doctrine of the Institutes of the Christian Religion. The major concern of the covenant theologians was not with justification,

---

1.Sibbes, Works, VII. p.483; also Adams,T., Works, III. p.205.
2.Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.119.
3.Gataker, Sermons, p.31. ("The Christian Man's Care")
4.Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.324.
5."God hath appointed certaine things to be done by men, which they that will not refuse to do, may doe, and those that shal doe, shall be regenerated." (Whately, The Nevv Birth p.117)
6.Preston, Breast-Plate, p.142; cf. also Saints Qualification, p.556.

God's forgiveness of sins, nor even with sanctification, God's giving a new heart; these were clearly God's work. What they elaborated upon was the way in which man must take hold of the grace received from God and confirm God's covenant, striving to live obediently according to God's law.

The crux of the matter, however, is who are God's chosen people. Actual numbers are never discussed; Sibbes at one point says not all nor few but "many" are chosen.[1] God does not make his covenant with every man, yet it is offered "to every man under heaven without any restraint at all."[2] But though it be offered to all men, God intends it only for the elect. "The gate is open to all, we shut out none, but none will come in, but those whom God enables."[3] To put it another way, Preston differentiates between a conditional and an absolute covenant. The conditional covenant is offered to all; the absolute covenant is made with the elect.[4] Christ's work of redemption was sufficient for all men,[5] and therefore the conditional covenant -- "if you believe you shall be saved" -- belongs to all men. Yet to be effective and confirmed it must be "wrought by God." God could, if he had pleased, changed the hearts of all; why he didn't do so is not a question to be argued.[6] Many are commanded to repent, but God does not bring every man to repentance. The commandments show men their duty but doesn't show what God will work in every man.[1]

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, VII. p.263; also Ainsworth, Communion of Saints, p.344

[2] Preston, Breast-Plate, p.8

[3] ibid., p.10; also Perkins, Works, III. pp.61,483; Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.205; Scudder, Christians Daily Walke, pp.454-5.

[4] Preston, op. cit., p.31.

[5] Ball, op. cit., p.205. Adams (Works, III. pp.206-7) sets forth the view that Christ's sacrifice was universal in four respects: in time ("No time is excepted.."); in place ("men may flock from the four winds"); in object "("No sin is excepted"); in subject ("no sort of man excepted..The servant as well as the master.") But yet all men are not blessed by the covenant, for "some men did not receive it...some did not believe it...some did not know of it...some never heard of it." (p.207)

[6] Ainsworth, A Seasonable Discourse, p.17.

There is no sure and certain way by which it is possible for any man to say who is called into covenant by God. It is not within the power of any man to look into the heart of another, and therefore, men are warned not to count any man damned.[2] Rather the question of whether or not a man is in covenant with God should be answered by "rationall charity." Men are urged to consider their fellows regenerate unless there be clear evidence to the contrary.[3] As Fotherby puts it,

> "...we must iudge the best, and thinke most charitably of all that outwardly receiue and professe the word and yeeld some obedience unto it."[4]

A minister must recognize that he preaches "promiscuously both to the elect and those that are not,"[5] and both groups should be made acquainted with the wondrous means God has established in his covenant. The question of differentiating between these two sorts of men becomes further complicated by the fact that God gives even the reprobates his spirit, not that it may renew their natures, but that it may "only in the outward action represse the act of sin, for as thereby without any inward change he shall be as ciuilly iust and upright in outward conversation as any in the world."[6] Sometimes these Puritans speak of an inward and an outward covenant. All who are in the church belong to the outward covenant, while only the elect have the inward covenant which works a change of heart.[1] As Bulkeley says, men may be in covenant two ways, either "in appearance" or "according to truth."[2] All who hear salvation preached do not believe; it is perfectly possible that "a man may live within the circumference of the gospel and have no benefit by it."[3] Every church presumably has some hypocrites, but these Puritans are willing to "iudge the best" of all who regularly attend church and live a life outwardly conformable to God's laws. In the final analysis the question of whether a man is elected can only be answered by God and by each man for himself in his own heart.

---

[1] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.134.
[2] Hooker, Covenant of Grace Opened, p.20
[3] Perkins, Works, II. p.263.
[4] Fotherby, Covenant Between God and Man (1616) p.16.
[5] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.389.
[6] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.417; also Dyke, D., The Mystery of Selfe-Deceiving (1617) p.41. Ball, op. cit., p.13 questions "whether these things come from the compact of workes, or be gifts of bounty and Gods righteous administration, for a time respiting the sentence denounced against man for breach of the Covenant, and vouchsafing unto him some temporall good things for the use and benefit of humane Society."

This helps to explain why so much emphasis is placed upon man's self-examination to ascertain whether he is in the covenant. "Few men," writes Perkins, "have a calling to enquire into other mens lives, but every man hath a calling to search into himselfe."[4] Covenant religion was in this sense quite individual and introspective. It centered in the direct relationship of God and man, and affirmed that a man can know whether or not he is elected of God.[5] While it is futile for man to attempt to delve into the "secret mysteries" of God's predestination and decrees; he is able to look into his heart and see whether "God have taught it to love or no."[6] Try yourself, search yourself, examine your ways, see that your estate is good, "labour to be more and more assured of these things," such should be a man's daily endeavor. "If there is anything in the world worth labouring for, it is the getting sound evidence to our souls that God is ours."[1]

---

[1] Cf. Hooker, *Faithful Covenanter*, p.16 and *Covenant of Grace*, p.23; also Sibbes, *Works*, III. p.12; VII. p.480 and Ball, *Treatise of Faith*, pp.273-4; *Treatise of Covenant of Grace*, pp.24-5.

[2] Bulkeley, *Gospel-Covenant*, p.361.

[3] Adams, *Works*, III. p.208.

[4] Perkins, *Works*, III. p.419.

[5] Cf. Ames, "Second Epistle of Peter" in *Works*, p.163.

[6] Sibbes, *op. cit.*, IV. p.182.

But if a man does not readily find assurance from such inquiry into his heart, he is not to become discouraged. He may look upon himself as elected![2] He need not be uneasy about God's work, but leaving that to God he should "trust God and be doing."[3] No man is told that he is not among God's people or that he is ineligible to covenant with God. On the contrary, while the general assumption is that all cannot be in the covenant, yet in particular there always seems to be a possibility that this or that man may be in covenant. The tone of much covenant preaching and writing is that only man's consent is lacking to make his salvation effectual. No man is lost unless he considers himself damned; no man is condemned unless having heard the good news he turns away.[4] Only he who refuses to yield obedience is certain of damnation. There is nothing, according to John Ball, which hinders a man from coming into covenant except his own perverseness.[5] Over and over it is impressed upon men that they must consent if they are to be saved, and that unless they believe and obey they cannot hope to enjoy God's favor.

The conception of God electing certain men before all time to be saved through the mediation of Christ is still assumed, though it is driven into the background. Even the covenant made to Abraham and his seed should not permit a man to feel that the covenant may be his simply by inheritance. As Henry Barrow insisted, "they are the Children of Abraham and of his couenant which doe the worckes and remayne in the faith of Abraham."[1] On the other hand, a positive affirmation of the theory of reprobation is missing. Salvation is through God's covenant mutually engaged in rather than by divine decrees. The wondrous mercy of God is best portrayed in that he has not "rested" in decrees but has engaged in a covenant with and through Christ to save sinners.[2] Consequently these writers are concerned that men understand their role and so they tend to over emphasize man's actually minor part. In the writings of Sibbes, Preston, and Goodwin, most especially, the plea to men is so strong that reprobation appears to result from man's rebellion and salvation from man's consent.

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, I. p.270.

[2] ibid., I. p.49; also Perkins, Works, I. p.296.

[3] Sibbes, op. cit., I. p.243.

[4] Perkins, op. cit., I. p.168; Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.391.

[5] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.244. "No man is excluded from that mercie, but hee that shuts forth himself by Infidelity." (Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.152.)

Yet it must always be recalled that the covenant was a covenant of grace; it rested upon God's favor and mercy. These men were trying to formulate in terms most real for their times the relation of God and man. They took the idea of covenant as the best way of characterizing this, but the covenant didn't always fit. In order to make it applicable they modified the definition of a covenant so that in this covenant of grace, one party, God, actually undertook the part of both parties to the agreement. The divine human situation would not permit man to enter into covenant with God without God having first enabled man to covenant. Strictly speaking the covenant of grace was not a covenant in the ordinary sense, but once having said that God undertakes both his part and man's in the covenant, these writers proceed to define a part which man must do if the covenant is to be effected.

---

[1] Barrow, A Plaine Refutation of M. Giffard's Booke (1591) p.62.
[2] Goodwin, Works, IV. p.233.

A new recognition of man is not only evident in an acknowledgment of the importance of his will, but also in the very fact that God covenants with him. God is said to honor his people when he enters into covenant with them. In Bulkeley's words, he "puts a kind of royalty and dignity upon them, when it shall be seen they are a people in covenant with the most high God."[1] God "stooped below himself, and hath lift us aboue our selves"[2] in making a covenant. The whole tenor of covenant theology was to raise man up to a new status by personalizing God's plan of salvation through the idea of a covenant which requires men to show actively by their lives the faith which is in them.

The Covenant Theory of Salvation.

Salvation, wrote Daniel Dyke, is found "neither in the histories of the Creation, &c, nor in the Legall commandements, threatnings, promises, but onely in the Covenant of Grace."[3] This statement summarizes the trend of covenant thinking. Salvation is only by covenant. None was ever saved by the covenant of works, so that the covenant of grace is the only way of salvation for man. "He that is not saved by the Covenant of Grace must and shall perish everlastingly."[4] Every man that will be saved must be saved by it.

Essentially the theory of the covenant is the theory of man's salvation. It is the way which offers reconciliation between "aliens and strangers" and enables man to enter into a new relationship with God. God instituted the covenant of grace to offer man another, and a better, way to enter into his Kingdom, when the first covenant was broken by Adam.

---

[1] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.28.

[2] ibid., p.42

[3] Dyke, D., The Second and Last Part of the Workes.. (1633) p.184.

[4] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of GRace, p.23; Bulkeley, op. cit., p.43; Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.351,480.

While God inaugurated this covenant of grace, the foundation of the covenant is Christ. The covenant is established in Christ.[1] Sixteenth century English covenant preachers do not emphasize the role of Christ as strongly as later men did. In fact, the existence of a covenant between God and Christ was not mentioned by Greenham, Perkins, Browne, or Dod, while there is only a bare reference to it in Ames and Adams.[2] Later writers — Sibbes, Preston, Goodwin, Scudder, Bulkeley, etc. — devote considerable attention to it. And yet none of these men really describe or write of the covenant between God and Christ in detail. Beyond the affirmation that such a covenant exists and that it made possible reconciliation between God and man, it is not generally elaborated.[3]

The application of the covenant idea to Father and Son rested upon the interpretation of Isaiah liii.10.[4] Redemption is based upon an agreement between God and Christ in which God agrees to save some of mankind upon payment by Christ of a just price.[5] Goodwin hastens to assure his readers that God did not covenant with Christ because he did not have enough power to re-create man; this covenant "adds no new power to him, which he had not in himself afore."[6] It introduces no new doctrine, but it does portray Christ as representing mankind and pleading with God to save sinners. In this special covenant God promised to give Christ those souls God had elected if Christ would perform the necessary conditions of the covenant of works in their stead. "When Christ has done all that was required, and failed not", God's justice was satisfied and at the same time his loving kindness revealed. God pardoned "millions of men" under the Old Testament simply upon "the bare word of Christ" before he came into the world, and now that he has accomplished the conditions of his "ancient agreement" with God, he "hath put in stock enough to pardon sinners to the end of the world."[1] Christ died to establish and ratify the covenant of grace,[2] and God gave him as "his wages and reward" the salvation of those he died for.[3] And the conclusion is that God must be just and fulfill his part of the covenant "otherwise Christ's obedience would cry as the work of an hireling doth for wages."

---

[1] Scudder, op. cit., p.574. Also Goodwin, Works, I. p.31
[2] Ames, Marrow, p.74; Adams, Works, III. p.209.
[3] Goodwin and Bulkeley offer the fullest account of this covenant.
[4] Ames, op. cit., p.74.
[5] ibid., p.70
[6] Goodwin, op. cit., IV. p.539.

Since Christ's death is involved, the covenant of grace is also called a testament.[4] It is a covenant "in respect of the manner of agreement," and a testament "in respect of the manner of confirming;" "a covenant in respect of God; a Testament in respect of Christ."[5] "Covenant in Christ" is effective for those whom God gave to Christ to be saved, and therefore, sometimes a believer is said to contract with Christ.[6] All God's promises are made good in Christ, so that salvation is believing in him. He is the mediator, a friend to both God and man, who makes possible their reconciliation. It is only by Christ's fulfilling his covenant with God that God is willing to "put away" the sins of men and enter into covenant with them.

---

[1] Goodwin, op. cit., IV. p.214.
[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of GRace, p.255.
[3] Goodwin, op. cit., IV. p.215.
[4] Sibbes, op. cit., III. p.521; Ames, Marrow, p.101.
[5] Ball, op. cit., p.196.
[6] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.536.

Outside of Christ men are slaves and enemies of God; in Christ they are free men who enter into "terms of friendship" with God.[1] Therefore, those divine promises offering salvation are only for those who belong to Christ and rely upon God's mercy in Christ. Where there is this mutual arrangement in which "God engageth himself to us, and we engage ourselves to God in Christ," there is the covenant. Just as Christ partakes of the human nature of all men by his covenant with God, so men do not partake of the divine nature of Christ without a covenant or "marriage" with him.[2] Frequently the union of Christ and man is termed "a covenant of marriage," and man warned lest he commit "spiritual adultery" by following after "strange loves", such as love of the world, Satan, and the flesh.[3]

God promises man at least three things in his covenant: washing away of his sins, giving him a new heart, and providing him with outward comforts.[4] These are, respectively, the promises of justification, sanctification and "blessings of all sorts." The covenant changes the relation of God and man from that of a "hard master" to a servant to a Father to his son.[5]

Because there is no salvation outside the covenant, it behooves man to covenant with God. Men need not think they will be saved when they live "as strangers from God" and "will enter into no bonds with him but walk after their own lusts."[6] They are merely deceiving themselves, for God only conveys his salvation to those who are in covenant with him. Hence the admonition that each man make sure he is in covenant with God. He should bend every effort to bring his soul together with God. Go and claim the covenant and its promises from God, advises Preston, and you cannot miss it! "Plead the Covenant hard with God;" take no denial![1] And yet no man can indeed do this unless God has first called him. As Sibbes warns, "It is arrogant presumption to hope for heaven and salvation before we have grace to answer all of God's promises and commands."[2]

---

[1] Cf. Sibbes, *Works*, IV. p.216; VII. p.482.
[2] Adams, *op. cit.*, III. p.210.
[3] Dyke, D., *op. cit.*, pp.234-5.
[4] Preston, *Nevv Covenant*, p.468; *Saints Qualification*, pp.128-9.
[5] Preston, *Life Eternall*, II.p.88; *Nevv Covenant*, pp.425,462,483.
[6] Bulkeley, *op. cit.*, p.43.

While Christ's work of salvation was great enough to make possible the salvation of all men, God gave him only a prescribed number as his "sheep."[3] Only God knows for certain who are his elect, but what these covenant preachers wanted to make certain was that no man would be kept out of the covenant through his own unwillingness to accept Christ. God has already determined who is in his covenant, and this he has kept to himself. But the uncertain factor is whether man would consent to enter God's covenant. Admittedly no man could consent unless God gave him the power to do so, but, on the other hand, no man would know whether he had grace to covenant until he made the effort. Therefore, the covenant theologians spared no pains to impress upon man the necessity of believing in Christ and accepting God's covenant. It is with this idea in mind that they could tell their readers,

> "...go thou to God, and ask him boldly, whether he did not do this for thee, and whether thou wert not one of them intended by him. Put God to it, and God will..answer this question."[4]

---

[1] Preston, Nevv Covenant, pp.468,469,477; Saints Qualification, p.329.
[2] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.483.
[3] As Dyke,D., op. cit., p.66 explains Christ made available God's favor, but salvation is "a free gift of God's grace."
[4] Goodwin, T., Works, IV. p.43.

These advocates of the covenant sought to stir up hope in men's hearts. Theirs was anything but a counsel of despair. Rather there is a pervasive optimism in their writings. "Say not, there is no hope; we have a promise, and we may be the children of the Covenant, to whom the promise is made."[1] This was their general view: "we *may* be children of the Covenant."

But over and above all the pleading to men to claim the covenant of God is the underlying assumption that no man can covenant without God's grace. Covenant preachers purposed to acquaint men with the wonders of God and his covenant and to stir them to live according to the demands of that covenant, knowing that whether a man was in God's favor or was a reprobate such advise and admonition would do no harm. In the case of the reprobate all of his efforts would bring him no nearer God and salvation. But the elect, being enabled by God, would merely live as they should. Men by their actions would eventually give evidence of whether truth and grace lay in them.[2] Covenant theology did not challenge but rather affirmed the doctrine that grace to believe and to obey was still the gift of an almighty and sovereign God. But in addition they impressed upon man his obligation to accept God's offer and to covenant with God.[3] It is assumed that God cannot "be wholly mine, unlesse I be wholly his."[4]

If theologically speaking, the covenant gave encouragement to man's willing and consenting to God's work of salvation, from another point of view it served to give him greater assurance of his salvation. The covenant was commonly interpreted as a doctrine of

---

1.Bulkeley, *op. cit.*, p.168.
2.Cf. Ball, *Treatise of Faith*, p.85.
3.Bulkeley, *op. cit.*, p.32.
4.Ball, *Treatise of Covenant of Grace*, p.89.

comfort.[1] "For what is sweeter to a troubled conscience, then the assurance of salvation."[2] A Christian's comfort is that God has made an everlasting covenant with him. The covenant affirms God's willingness to enter into a new relation with man, and gives man a greater degree of hope that he might possibly be numbered among God's chosen. If salvation depended solely upon God's original decrees, then the question of whether or not a man is elected is abstract and impersonal as well as unknowable. But if the idea of covenant is introduced, then salvation is clearly set forth in personal terms and not only does a man have a chance to ascertain whether he is elected but also he can plead his election. The mood of covenant thinking is the greater assurance man has of God's favor. The covenant helped answer man's deep concern for more direct evidence of his salvation. It spoke a message of God's great mercy in providing a new way to bring man once again to God and thus gave man hope that he too might be eligible to be in God's covenant. It drove man to seek the covenant and make good the terms.

This doctrine of salvation skillfully combined seemingly conflicting theories. Great stress is placed upon God's goodness in saving men, without at all impugning God's righteousness and his judgments. God is described as mysterious and unknowable, and yet there is an assurance that he has revealed his peculiar way of salvation to men and so has shown that he still cares for mankind. Man is described as utterly corrupt and weak and yet as having freedom to enter into covenant with God. Man's destiny is sealed by God's secret decree of pre-

---

1.Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.341; Bulkeley, op. cit., "To the Reader." Also Ames, Marrow, p.103.

2.Ainsworth, The Communion of Saints, "To the Christian Reader".

destination, yet man must willingly enter into the covenant with God in order to insure his salvation. God is an all-powerful sovereign, yet he is voluntarily bound by the covenant which he himself has proposed to make good his promises. The covenant Puritans may have made no direct attempt to soften the terrors of the Almighty, but indirectly they accomplished just that in the idea of covenant by giving greater emphasis to those aspects of God's nature and activity which encourage a man to believe that salvation could be his and that God's ways are reasonable.

These rather paradoxical features permeate covenant theology and illustrate the divergent trends in the thinking of covenant writers. On the one hand, they were trying to affirm the central features of Calvinistic theology; on the other they were seeking to provide man a fuller sense of his personal, moral, and social responsibility. Developed within the framework of predestination, extolling the majesty of God and accepting the depravity of man, covenant theology emphasized God's mercy and urged man to accept God's generous offer of a covenant. It stressed strong personal relationships between God and men which made religion a warm, direct, personal experience. The God of the covenant is a God men can depend upon. It is comforting to have in the covenant "a certain rule to go by."[1] The state of the Christian in covenant is indeed a wondrous secure one, and consequently the doctrine of covenant was interpreted as providing comfort and assurance to estranged souls.

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, V. p.181.

The Role of Scriptures.

In general Puritans turned to the Bible for their guide. Everything was judged in accordance with what was written in God's holy books. The Bible was regarded as the source of man's knowledge of God's will. It presented "a sufficient rule of Faith and Manners" for the whole of life.[1] Both the Old Testament and the New Testament were looked to as one continuous revelation of God's directions for man's life both in relation to God and to his fellow men.

The covenant preachers were quite sure that the idea of covenant was directly warranted by the Scriptures. They, therefore, sought passages in the Bible to prove their contention that the covenant is God's way of dealing with men.[2] The covenant, wrote Adams, "is registered in the Scriptures and kept upon eternal record in heaven."[3] This support from God's Word gives man something to hold to.

Essentially covenant thinking did have a Biblical background and outlook. It was rooted in the Scriptures, and the Old and New Testaments, especially the former, gave concrete validity and impetus to the idea. Passages mentioning the covenant idea are numerous in the Scriptures, but while these Puritans repeatedly mentioned the Bible as supporting their doctrines, they were not always able to cite specific passages. John Ball, for example, frankly admits, "we reade not the word Covenant betwixt God and man, ever since the Creation, both in Innocency, and under the fall," yet "we have in Scripture what may amount to as much."[4] Later he sweepingly claims that there is ample evidence in the Scriptures for the covenant, but he fails to be explicit by pointing out the particular passages which confirm this.[1] Other writers spoke of the covenant as the revealed way of God towards man without mentioning those pertinent verses which would substantiate their claim. The idea of a covenant was indeed in the Scriptures, but not always the detailed interpretation and application of the idea which these men made.

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.224.

[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.23

[3] Adams, op. cit., III. p.210.

[4] Ball, op. cit., p.6.

The Biblical passages usually quoted are predominantly from the Old Testament. God's covenanting with various of the patriarchs — Abraham (Genesis xv.17 and xvii.2,4,7), Issac (Genesis xxvi.3), Jacob (Genesis xxxv.12) and Noah (Genesis vi.18 and ix.8) — were frequently mentioned. God's covenant with Abraham has special importance since here for the first time God made a covenant with a man and his heirs as a covenant of faith.[2] The covenant with Noah was noteworthy because the term "covenant" was then first employed. Passages from the prophets describing God's covenant with Israel, showing that God covenants with a people as well as with individuals, were commonly mentioned too. Jeremiah xxxii.40 and l.5, Hosea ii.18, Isaiah lv.1-3, liv.8,9, and lix.21, Ezekiel xi.19, xx.37, xxxvii.26, and xxxvi.26,27 were among these quoted. But the most widely used verses, and the passage considered to contain the gist of the covenant was Jeremiah xxxi:31,33:

> "Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.9.

[2] Bulkeley (op. cit., p.35) calls Abraham "the common parent of all the faithful."

Besides such general references to the covenant, other verses are sometimes alluded to which deal with particular aspects of the covenant. For instance, in reference to "breaking covenant" (Genesis xvii.14, Leviticus xxvi.15) or "keeping covenant" (Psalms xxv. 10, xliv.17, ciii.17,18) or "entering covenant" (Psalm 1.5) Evidently the Scriptures were searched with the covenant in mind, since numerous verses, some of them only implicitly related to the idea of covenant, are quoted to substantiate the theory.

Despite the repeated assurances that the New Testament confirmed the covenant in even clearer fashion than the Old Testament, there is surprisingly little reference to New Testament Passages. The New Testament was generally alleged to confirm Old Testament experience. Therefore, it was assumed that even if the covenant is not so specifically mentioned in the New Testament, neither is it repudiated, and so must remain extant. As a matter of fact, the New Testament was regarded as the fulfillment of "the new covenant" m entioned in Jeremiah xxxi. What New Testament verses are quoted refer to Old Testament passages or covenants,[1] or else Pauline doctrines are quoted as supporting covenant theology.[2]

Fotherby was one writer who made a direct attempt to prove the validity of the covenant by the Scriptures. He devoted a long section of his work to the evidences in the Old Testament of the taking and the renewing of God's covenant. But when he turns to the New Testament he simply asserts that "the Couenant hath beene reneued often under the Gospel, as it was under the Law."[1] He is only able to cite a few New Testament passages supporting the covenant -- Hebrews viii.10, Acts xix.17,18, II Corinthians ix.13; Philippians ii.12, II Corinthians viii.5, Romans vi.17 -- and attributes the paucity of references to the shortness of time covered by the New Testament as compared to the Old.[2] Actually only the first of the above sequence of verses mentions the covenant properly and it is a quotation from Isaiah.

---

[1] Hebrews viii.8-12; II Corinthians iii.6; Galatians iii.15-17.

[2] Romans iv.16; Hebrews vi.5, Ephesians i.13, ii.17, and vi.15 and II Corinthians ii.16. (Most of these are quoted by Ames for one.)

All in all surprisingly little effort was made to confirm the covenant by the Scriptures; nor are the writers concerned that the Scriptures do not yield more evidence of the idea. Some writers made no attempt to offer Scriptural authority, and few tried to trace the covenant through Old and New Testaments. They were satisfied to state generally that the Scriptures offered substantial proof of the validity of God's covenant. And in truth without the sanction found in the Scriptures, it is difficult to imagine covenant theology developing. The Bible was too central in the religion of the Puritan for it to be by-passed in any interpretation of theology. If, as Sibbes affirmed, "there is not any thing or any condition that befalls a Christian in this life but there is a general rule in the Scripture for it,"[3] then the extent to which the Scriptures support the covenant idea is important. Since the Scriptures were regarded as a unit, the Old Testament was credited equal in value with the New. Consequently there was only one covenant revealed in the two testaments (God's covenant with Adam before the fall not being counted since it was broken). It was therefore not a matter of real concern that the New Testament was not as explicit upon the idea of covenant as the Old. All books of the Bible were regarded as referring to and revealing one divine design progressively in a fuller and clearer way.

---

[1] Fotherby, Covenant Betweene God and Man, p.59.
[2] ibid., p.58.
[3] Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.209.

Covenant Morality

Theology for the Puritan covenant preachers was first and foremost a practical discipline.[1] As has already been stated, these men were not interested in speculative thought. Theology, according to them, was concerned with "living well" and so was concerned with morality in individual and social relations. Ames was emphatic in rejecting any view which separated "Divinity" and "Ethicks."[2] "Divinity," he writes, "instructs us to live not only piously and religiously, but also temperately, and justly, that is, approvedly and honestly." Morality clearly rested upon religion.

Richard Sibbes called attention to three fundamental points in religion: the misery of man, the deliverance of man, and man's duty.[3] It is not only important to know what God will do for man, but what he will have of man.[4] Man's duty is considered most clearly prescribed in the Ten Commandments.[5] While the Commandments are divided into a first and second table, yet the duties of the second table are expressly said to stem from the first. Any man who deals unjustly with his neighbor rebels against God. Man's duty to God is considered the root of his duty to his fellow-men.[6] Only by obeying God is it possible to deal justly with men. On the other hand, no man can be so devout to God that he neglects his duties to men.[1] "The truth of religion cannot consist with the neglect of Justice and Charity toward our neighbours."[2]

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.3
[2] ibid., p.200.
[3] Sibbes, Works, V. p.227.
[4] ibid., VI. p.112.
[5] Ames, op. cit., pp.193-4.
[6] Sibbes, op. cit., VI. p.139.

The covenant always interpreted the life of a Christian as involving obligations to God and man. God's covenant did indeed provide great comfort, but it also brought great privileges,[3] and these two can not rightly be separated. "Mercie and obedience are linked."[4] The fact that God is merciful is considered an obligation to a "stricter life." The person in covenant with God shows his state of grace by the new quality of his actions.[5] Being in the covenant involves both a "dying to sin" and a "living to righteousness."[6] Faith as the condition of the covenant means not simply believing in God through Christ, but in yielding "sincere, uniform, willing, upright, and constant obedience unto his Commandements."[7] Hooker spoke of a "double covenant," involving the "covenant of faith" or being in God, and the "covenant of new obedience" or walking with God.[8] To be in covenant requires a fundamental reformation in a man's manner of life.[9] He is expected to bring forth good works, and if he does not certainly can not be in covenant with God.[1] "Where disobedience is there is no faith."[2] All evidence is clear that to be in covenant with God obligates a person to be good. It is "the ground of all duty."[3] This obedience is in no way to be interpreted as "the cause of life" -- it does not justify -- but as the effect of faith it is the necessary "way of life."[4]

---

[1] Scudder, Christians Daily Walke, p.387.
[2] Ames, Marrow, p.300.
[3] Sibbes, Works, V. p.473.
[4] Ball, Treatise of Faith, part I, p.33.
[5] According to Ames, only they "make their election sure, that make their calling sure," and "an endeavour to abound in vertue and to do good workes is the only meanes to make our calling and election sure." (Works, "Exposition on Second Peter", p.164.)
[6] Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, p.290.
[7] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.18,43; cf. also Sibbes, Works, V. p.342. Faith is definitely primary to obedience, "for there can be no vitall actions brought forth, unlesse a principle of life be first begotten within." (Ames, Marrow, p.4)
[8] Hooker, Faithful Covenanter, pp.10-11. Thomas Adams similarly refers to "double grace: one to be able to will and do that is good, the other to be able to persevere in willing and doing good." (Works, III. p.177)
[9] Preston, Saints Qualification, pp.89,289.

Covenant writers generally inveigh against a libertine spirit. The covenant itself is interpreted as an argument against "carnall liberty," for it binds man "faster to God, to walk before him in obedience." To say "there is no covenant between God and us, it opens a gap to loosenesse of spirit."[5] The fact that God is gracious and performs man's part in the covenant as well as his own should not justify a man living as he wills. In the covenant there is "a spirituall liberty from our enemies, but there is *subjection* required to the Lord."[6] Christians in covenant are "servants of righteousness," not followers of "carnall liberty."[7] The covenant offers a definite rule by which the man in covenant should live; it does not foster aimless living. Actually the assurance that God in the covenant is merciful calls for "a stricter bond to a holy life."[8]

Likewise an antinomian view is rejected. Because this is a covenant of grace it does not follow that the law is completely superseded and set aside. "True religion bindeth the whole man to the whole Law of God."[1] The distinction drawn between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace does not imply that the moral law is dissociated from God's new covenant. Within the second covenant the law still gives direction. However, it is no longer "hard bondage" as in the covenant of works,[2] but a guide to Christian living. Under the covenant of grace the law still is a means to humble man and to point out the depth of his unworthiness and obedience; it convicts man of his sin and shows the necessity of repentance; it is the "unchangeable rule of life and manners" for all in covenant with God.[3] There is no ethical laxity in the main stream of covenant writing, and antinomianism with its undermining of morality by its exaltation of faith and grace is specifically decried.

---

[1] Greenham, *Works*, p.249. "If God be our God," writes Bulkeley, "he must rule us, and we must be ruled and governed by him." (*op.cit.*p153)

[2] Ball, *Treatise of Faith*, part I, p.32 Further Ball says, "To follow his Commandements by our deeds," is the "inescapable consequent" of embracing God by faith.

[3] Sibbes, *Works*, V. p.94; Fotherby, *op. cit.*, p.32.

[4] Ball, *Treatise of Covenant of Grace*, pp.19-20.

[5] Bulkeley, *op. cit.*, p.33.

[6] *ibid.*, p.152.

[7] Ames, *Works*, "Second Peter," p.231.

[8] Sibbes, *op. cit.*, VII. p.537.

Every effort is made in covenant theology to impress upon man that the duties which God proposes are utterly reasonable. Man being an understanding creature, God sets duties in a reasonable framework. His government is reasonable, not arbitrary or tyrannical. God does not demand that which man is not able to perform. He does not bind man beyond man's capacity to fulfill. It is part of this new covenant, that whatsoever our duty is, we shall have ability to perform it by the Spirit of Christ.[4] Men are cautioned not to undertake their duties in their own strength but continually to seek God's grace to enable them to fulfill their obligations. God has promised that he will give him who is in covenant whatever he requires.

---

[1] Taylor, Works, p.9; cf. also Ames, Marrow, p.194. In Ball's words, those united to Christ are not "lawlesse, but they come to take a yoake upon them, and stand obliged to fulfill the law of Christ, called the New Commandement." (Treatise of Faith, p.371.)

[2] Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.322.

[3] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.15

[4] Sibbes, Works, V. p.342; also p.18. "To whom God gives to believe in him to them he gives to obey, and doe all his Commandements." (Ball, op. cit., p.43).

Referring again to the inner and outer covenant, the latter can belong to any one and is similar to God's general calling or general election.[1] It simply signifies that outwardly a person appears to be conforming to God's way. The inner covenant corresponds to God's special calling and indicates that a man's outward performance stems from an inward reformation of the heart. It is this inner covenant which is, strictly speaking, the covenant of grace with God's elect. Covenant religion is not an "outside religion," for that is "popery," and to be eschewed and abhorred. God looks to the inward man, to the heart. This inner covenant so transforms a man's soul that his will is re-directed toward God rather than toward himself, as is the case of natural man. The covenant requires "a new heart,"[2] and is concerned not merely with what man does but what he is. "A Christian is what his heart and inward man is," says Sibbes.[3]

The religion of the covenant was not a religion of "speculation,"[4] or of learning,[5] but a religion of godliness.[6] Consequently its ethic was neither one of negative righteousness nor the living of "a civill, sober, honest, blamemesseness before men" but a positive inner principle of obedience and love. He who is in covenant shows his religion not by word but by "the fruits of the Spirit."[1] Faith must be accompanied by works; "you that comfort yourselves by saying God is merciful and will forgive sins, yet you do not depart from sin, your hope shall perish."[2] The life of the believer in covenant gives evidence that he is a follower of Christ. If it be true that God supplies a man with grace sufficient for him to undertake that to which he is obligated, at the same time "a man hath no more truth and power of grace, then he hath a care to show it in a due performance of the duties of his calling."[3] They who would claim to be in the covenant must ask themselves "what peculiar thing do we?" What are the principles and motives by which we act? What is the disposition and temper of the heart? This is the primary question, for the true child of God, he who is in God's covenant, is motivated only by love to God. His will has been reformed so that he intends good.

---

[1] Sibbes, *Works*, III. pp.61,292,483; cf. Ainsworth, *Covnterpoyson*, p.123.
[2] Preston, *Saints Qualification*, p.289.
[3] Sibbes, *op. cit.*, II. p.49.
[4] *ibid.*, V. p.461.
[5] Preston, *Breast-Plate*, p.225: "Religion is the Art of holy men, and not of learned men." In similar vein Playfere holds that knowledge without goodness is of no avail; "God's son's must not only teach well but also DOE well." (*Sermons*, p.141).
[6] Says Thomas Gataker, "There is no way unto God but by Godlinesse." (*Sermons*, "True Contentment", dedicatory epistle)

It is not in his actions that natural man is said to differ from the Christian in covenant, but in his intentions and aims.[4] Both kinds of men do the same things, but they do them from different principles. A good or bad love makes a good or bad life.[5]

> "Men are as their aims. Noble spirits have noble aims. Christians are of an higher rank than ordinary men, and therefore they have higher aims. Religion...taketh a man off from a false end, and pitcheth him upon a true end. It taketh him from himself...and telleth him that the true end of all is to live to Christ."[6]

Again the voluntaristic emphasis of covenant thought is clear. Covenant ethics is centered upon the will. It inquires into a man's intentions and affirms "from the heart commeth actions of life."[1] God does not look so much to a man's work but to his resolutions and purposes.[2] Therefore, the good man not only does the work that God commands, but he does it out of love. While from the human standpoint external actions (that is, the emphasis upon "fruits") seem to be the basis of ethical judgment, yet from the divine point of view the essential thing is the inner motivation. This is no ethic of external works, but rather of inner holiness.

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, V. p.494; Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.5. "One handfull of doing," writes Playfere, "is worth a hundred tongue-fulls of teaching." (Sermons, p.144.)

[2] Ames, A Sound Out of Sion, p.5

[3] Scudder, op. cit., p.49

[4] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.340; also Ames, Cases of Conscience, III.19.1.

[5] Playfere, Sermons, V.191.

[6] Sibbes, op. cit., V. p.291;also VII. p.11.

> "God desireth truth in the inward parts -- you with your outward profession, outward Baptism, outward Supper, outward singing, outward praying stink in the nostrils of God."[3]

He is a stranger to the covenant who does not have the Spirit of God in his inward parts.

Not mere obedience to God's law is demanded of man in God's covenant, but a sincere obedience arising from a new creature who loves God. The end of preaching, writes Ames, is "love out of a pure heart and a good conscience."[4] There is thus a correlation between good works and inward rightness of heart. A table of commandments exists, but the emphasis of covenant ethics is upon the spirit in which those duties are undertaken. "God regards not so much the matter, as the forme of obedience; not so much the thing done, as the affection wherewith we doe it."[5] The question is "not so much enquired how great or little, as how sincere our faith and obedience is."[6]

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.3.

[2] Preston, Saints Qualification, p.561; Sibbes, Works, VII. p.490.

[3] Ames, A Sound Out of Sion, p.11.

[4] Ames, Marrow, p.155.

[5] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.84.

[6] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.172.

A man is as good as his will, but no man can have any "holy affection" or "integrity" of heart except by God's spirit. There is no reformation, no love of God, unless it be worked in a man's heart by God's grace.[1] The conversion of the will is wrought in man by God, but the resolution to obey, this "deed is wrought by us as instruments of God's working in us."[2]

But all man's obedience and good works in this world are weak and "imperfect in measure and degree." Even "the best actions of the most regenerate are but halfe good."[3] Even God's elect are "foolish, worldly, covetous, full of envy, lusts, passions, mistakings, ignorance, and the like."[4] They only have "knowledge, faith, and other virtues here in part;"[5] they live on earth a "mixed life." How then do the sins which men commit affect the covenant with God? All are agreed that no single sin can condemn a man, though God may "sharply correct" the sinner. There is "wondrous comfort" in knowing that God as a Father, having taken man into the covenant, will not cast off his children "for infirmities."[6] Though man be unfaithful, God continueth faithful.[7] He does not break his covenant when man is disobedient; in fact, for God to do so would make the covenant "not to depend upon mercy and free grace promised and bound with an oathe, but vpon our workes."[8] Yet God's mercy is no invitation to "take liberty," for God still exercises judgments and chastisements upon those

---

1. Preston, Breast-Plate, pp.49-50. ("Of Love")
2. Sibbes, Works, V. p.15.
3. Dyke, D., op. cit., p.120.
4. Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.143.
5. Ainsworth, A Seasonable Discourse, p.29; cf. Cotton, Covenant of God's Grace, p.7.
6. Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, pp.106,111-2; cf. Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.369.
7. Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.23.
8. Barrow, A Plaine Refutation.., pp.88-9; cf. Ainsworth, Animadversions, (1613) p.87.

who are careless in obeying him. When men "do not carry themselves as sons," then God exerts "a fatherly anger."[1] Every affliction a man suffers is an admonition from the Lord because of sins.[2] Though men break God's covenant by sinning, yet by repentance it can be renewed and continued.[3] "The Covenant of Grace calleth for perfection, accepteth sincerity, God in mercy pardoning the imperfections of our best performances."[4] In times of uncertainty and adversity, temptations and sins, in fact, in all times, men are urged to renew their covenant and seek God's grace. Only when a man deliberately turns away, and refuses to acknowledge his sin or to desire a remedy, does he effect a "divorce" and annul God's covenant with him.[5]

> "So long as you do not renounce your Covenant, and breake the bond; the substance of the Covenant is not yet broken, though some articles of the Covenant may be violated."[6]

In order to avoid some evils or to further some good it is also recommended that men engage in "particular" covenants which may serve to tie a man more securely to God.[7] Such covenants are subsumed under the covenant of grace and are considered helpful in keeping covenant. They are properly covenants with a special ethical motivation, binding man to a "straighter" way in the presence of some particular sin or temptation. They seemed to have been both negative and affirmative and to have been merely temporal and applicable for limited purposes. Christians are warned to avoid making a covenant against that which is not warranted by God's word. For example, a covenant to practise chastity and not marry or to become a hermit is not justified since no warrant for such is found in the Scriptures. On the other hand, to guard his heart, a man might covenant with his outward senses as David covenanted with his mouth and Job with his eyes that certain sins might be avoided.[1] These supplementary covenants are recommended where they might better enable a believer to fulfill his duties and to bring forth duties worthy of his state of grace.

---

[1] Sibbes, Works, VII. p.226.

[2] Preston, Golden Scepter, I. p.289.

[3] Repentance is essential in the covenant. "Without repentance," wrote Ainsworth, "there is no promise of pardon; and without promise, there can be no faith; and without faith, no covenant."(Covnterpoyson,p.133). Repentance must be practised as long as a man lives in the world and must always be joined "with a purpose of new obedience."(Playfere, Sermons, III.11) Man must often renew his covenant with God because of "the deceitfulnesse of his heart;" yet only those can repent who are called to repentance.

[4] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, pp.20-21;137; Sibbes, op. cit., VII. p.490.

[5] Cf. Preston, Sermon Preached Before His Maiesty (1634) p.148.

[6] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.171.

[7] Greenham, Works, pp.589,591; Perkins, Works, II. p.477; Taylor, Works, p.103; Sibbes, Works, VI. p.53.

From this discussion it is evident that the covenant did not present an ethic of law but an ethic of grace. Despite the legal terminology employed and the legalistic framework which "covenants" imply, covenant morality is not legalistic. Obedience to a rule and to duties are indeed commanded, but evangelical rather than legal obedience is called for.[2] The ultimate criterion is not the making good of the obligation but the spirit in which it is undertaken. Man's affections, the "reall impressions in the heart and frame of the creature," are more important than what he actually did outwardly. Love is the test. He who is motivated by love to God, even though his expressions of that love may be far from perfect is in God's covenant. Obedience to God's law is the rigorous condition of the covenant of works and man was unable to perform it. Now God has offered man a covenant of grace which centers in a changed heart, "in moderated affections," rather than in merely fulfilling the law. The changed man in covenant with God will do good deeds out of his love to God not as to a Judge but as to ax Father. But these deeds are the by-products and effects of newly directed affections rather than ends to be directly sought after. Yet a close correlation exists between a man's assurance of his election and his endeavor to do good works. Even though the ethical activity is consequent and "outward," yet moral obedience to God's law is essential and necessary to man's salvation and to his keeping God's covenant.

---

[1] Cf. Psalms cxix.37; Job xxxi.l.
[2] Hooker, Faithful Covenanter, p.13.

Towards a Philosophy of History

Covenant theology evidences a consciousness of history which is highly significant when it is recalled that the period under consideration marked the beginnings of an interest in historical perspectives. Ideas were just beginning to be explored in terms of history, and therefore it is to be expected that the historical interpretation of the idea of covenant is halting and incomplete. Undoubtedly the high esteem in which the Scriptures were held and the interest in tracing the covenant through the Old and New Testaments provided a major incentive to understanding the present in terms of the past. The story of the covenant in the Bible suggested the formulation of a nascent philosophy of history. Man's life through the ages was interpreted in terms of a covenant of salvation which characterized God's way of dealing with man from the beginning.

Indeed God had established two covenants with men. However, Bulkeley insists that both existed from eternity and that neither one can be considered prior to the other.[1] The first, the covenant of works, however, was revealed first historically since it was established with Adam at his creation. But it was never fulfilled. Adam, representing all mankind, broke it, and once broken it cannot be renewed. It demands perfect obedience which leaves no room for repentance. Though in a sense it may be said to continue in existence — every man is regarded born under the covenant of works[1] — its conditions are so strict that no man can fulfill them. It is not a covenant which God ever intended for fallen creatures.[2] Therefore, God in his infinite mercy offered man a new covenant, the covenant of grace by which God is reconciled to his chosen people through Christ. This covenant is established in Christ, who represented all the faithful and satisfied God's wrath toward men for breaking the first covenant by fulfilling the covenant and thus satisfying the conditions God's justice required. This new covenant provides the way for the salvation of God's elect and is the same for all ages.

---

[1] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.97.

Until it was fully established in Christ's coming, this covenant was known as the covenant of promise.[3] As a covenant of promise it was made with various individuals through the years — Adam after the fall, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, David, the nation of Israel, etc. Though it has been renewed frequently it is still the same covenant. God's covenant with Abraham was usually chosen by the Puritan writers as the most important early example of the covenant of grace, in part because of the New Testament references to it, but also because it was "more plainly set downe."[4] These various renewals of the covenant from generation to generation reveal the history of God's chosen people.[1]

---

[1] Bulkeley, op. cit., p.93.
[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.93.
[3] ibid., p.28ff.
[4] Fotherby, op. cit., p.30.

A few covenant writers -- notably Ames, Ball, and Bulkeley -- did not merely trace the covenant through Biblical characters but they divided all of history into ages showing various dispensations of the covenant. These men did not question the covenant being one since Adam's fall, but they did feel that it had manifested itself in different ways which suggested a progressive development. It is, wrote Ball, "the same in substance" though it "varieth in manner and circumstances."[2] And as Ames put it,

> "Although the free and saving Covenant of God hath beene only one from the beginning, yet the manner of the application of Christ, or of administring this hath not always beene one and the same, but divers according to the age in which the Church hath been gathered."[3]

Sometimes this covenant is differentiated into old and new covenants, "in regard of the manner of dispensing," corresponding roughly with the Old and New Testaments. But in either case it is the same covenant of grace with its promise of the benefits of Christ. In the main, God has dealt with all men since Adam in the same manner.

Ames proposed three periods of the covenant of grace: the first, from Adam to Moses; the second, from Moses to Christ; and the third from Christ to the end of the world.[4] In each of these succeeding periods there is said to be a progressively clearer and more ample revelation of God. History is "alwayes progresse from the more im-

---

[1] Fotherby, op. cit., pp.45-55 presents the most detailed listing of various Scriptural covenants although he admits including examples where "there be not the name and word of the couenant expressed."

[2] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.5, also p.96.

[3] Ames, Marrow, p.170; also p.176.

[4] ibid., pp.170ff.

imperfect to the more perfect"[1] as far as the covenant is concerned. It is a clear movement manifesting the Gospel "generally and more darkly, and then more specially and more cleerly." In the earliest period,

> "Before Moses the polity of the Church was rude and loose, as being in infancy: there were so many visible Churches as there were Families of godly persons; the Ministery was almost alwayes extraordinary by Prophets: the masters of Families, and first borne had right to administer some holy things, as ordinary Ministers, according to that direction which they received from the Prophets."[2]

It is to be noted that this history of God's people in covenant is interpreted by Ames as the history of the "Church".

This first period may be subdivided into two, one stretching from Adam to Abraham, and the other from Abraham to Moses. These sub-periods are also distinguished by the difference in the clarity of their revelation of God's government of man. For Ames each succedding period set forth the benefits of the new covenant "more cleerly and distinctly" than the age before. In fact, it was a general conclusion among covenant preachers that to Israel the covenant was only "half so clear" as to us,[3] although God gave more of the temporal and less of the spiritual blessings in the earlier ages.[4]

The second age, the years from Moses to Christ, are described by Ames as a time when God's ways

> "were further shadowed, by means both extraordinary, and also ordinary. The Discipline of that time that was merely Ecclesiasticall, was for a great part ceremoniall, yet so as all kind of holy things were to be preserved pure."[5]

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.170; cf. Ball, op. cit., p.32.
[2] Ames, op. cit., p.171.
[3] Taylor, Works, p.566.
[4] Ball, op. cit., p.55
[5] Ames, op. cit., p.174.

This was a stronger covenant than that which went before, and moreover it was a state covenant binding a nation to God.[1] The covenant had expanded from an individual and his heirs being a party to the nation as a whole people covenanting with the Lord.

There was a quite clear demarkation between the second and third periods, when Christ, who had been merely promised, now appears in person. The age of the New Testament begins, and it differs from the preceeding periods both in quality and quantity. In quality it is marked by "cleernesse or freedome," for Christ who was "before under a vaile" is now "offered with open and unvailed face;"[2] the government of the law is taken away also. In quality it differs in that "the application by the spirit is more effectual and the gifts of the spirit are more perfect, then ordinarily they were under the Old Testament," and because "it is not contracted to some one people, as before, but is diffused through the whole world."[3] Besides "a more cleere perspicuous knowledge of things," there are better promises and "a large infusion of the Spirit" in this period.[4] This third age has no term of duration, but lasts until the end of the world. Since it presents a perfect revelation, another period to which it should "give place as to the more perfect" is not expected.[5] It will therefore last "without end or alteration." In this covenant as now revealed "God hath revealed his whole pleasure touching the Salvation of man," and no additional covenant will supersede it.[6]

1.Ball, op. cit., p.92

2.Ames, op. cit., p.175.

3.ibid., p.177.

4.Preston, Nevv Covenant, p.328.

5.Ames, op. cit., p.175.

6.Ball, op. cit., p.23.

Despite these differentiations into periods the essence of the covenant was still the same. From its establishment with Adam "in the seed of the woman" down to the present it is still a covenant of grace. In administering the covenant before Christ's coming, there was, reports Ames, "some representation of the Covenant of Workes," which after Christ's coming completely disappears.[1] Thus the law given at Mount Sinai was "for substance" the covenant of grace, "though propounded in a manner fitting to the state of that people, time and condition of the Church...directing them how to walke before God in holinesse and righteousnesse, that they might inherit the promises of grace and mercy."[2]

Other descriptions of the various periods of covenant history follow in general Ames' main divisions. Sometimes, however, the three major ages are subdivided more minutely. Ball, for example, in discussing Ames' second period extending from Moses to Christ, divided it into a period from Moses to the return of Israel from the Bablyonish captivity, and then from Israel after the captivity until the coming of Christ.[3] Whatever the precise divisions, there is a marked progressive revelation throughout history couched in terms of the promises and seals of the covenant. Christ's coming is simply the perfecting of the covenant,[4] which remains unchanged as to administration until Christ comes again. Since Christ the covenant is so clearly revealed that no man has the excuse that he cannot understand it. Now the riches of God's grace and the superabundance of his love are more fully manifested to men than ever before.[1] Never has the covenant been so clear and so assuring as it is at present, and therefore men should readily take advantage of God's offer and covenant with him.

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.175.
[2] Ball, op. cit., p.102.
[3] ibid., pp.92,156. (cf. Chapters VII and X.)
[4] ibid., p.162.

The progressive character of the covenant is demonstrated not only in the amount of God's grace but by the nature of its blessings and the enlarged group to whom it pertains. Through the years the covenant also became more generally available. At first it was made with Adam, not as he was the common parent of all men, but as an individual believer.

> "In like manner it was made with the Patriarchs, with Noah, and his posterity; then with Abraham and his family; afterwards with one selected Nation; but under the Gospel all Nations are brought into the bond of the Covenant."[2]

This does not mean that every one in every nation is in covenant with God, for the covenant is only with those "with whom God hath contracted Covenant, and who in like manner have sworne unto the words of the Covenant, God stipulating, and they accepting the condition." Yet these elect belong not in one country but are scattered in all.

In tracing the covenant through history these Englishmen were concerned to point out the gradual growth of God's revelation. More than that, they were interested in emphasizing the continuity of God's ways. The story of the covenant is the story of God's salvation. It is the story of his promises and agreements with men. And while in each succeeding era God gave a clearler expression of his "free gracious Covenant," the important point is that an inquiry into history reveals that God deals with men in the same manner now as he did with the first man. History confirms the stableness of God. The history of the covenant helps give man assurance not only that God is dependable but also that he has intended more and more people to covenant with him. The interest these covenant preachers display in the historical context of the covenant is not motivated by a mere curiosity in early expressions of the idea; rather it is the interest in relating the past to the present and affirming that the way of salvation by covenant now available is the same as God made available to past generations. Placing the covenant in the stream of history also stresses that God's covenant is not something made once and for all to men in some former era but is available still to men now. Besides being a way of salvation and the basis of a reasonable morality, the theory of the covenant provided an outline of a philosophy of history. History reveals God's constant but progressively clearer offer of reconciliation by his covenant.

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.200.
[2] ibid., p.202.

THE COVENANT BETWEEN MEN

V. The Covenant and the Church

VI. The Covenant and Civil Societies

Chapter V.

THE COVENANT AND THE CHURCH

The two immediately preceeding chapters have centered upon describing and interpreting the idea of covenant as an inner bond between God and the heart of an individual believer. But as has been frequently intimated, the English covenant preachers also spoke of an outer covenant made between God and his people. This public covenant characterized the society of God, that is, God's elect gathered together in the visible church in this world. It is one of the social covenants, others of which will be treated in the chapter to follow. This chapter will explore the idea of covenant as it was used in describing the church. As would be expected, the interpretation of the church covenant differed according to the definition of the church. Primarily there were two kinds of church covenant: firstmthat emerging from the Presbyterian view of a national church, and secondly, that propounded by congregationalists and separatists who believed in individual particular churches.

Despite the numerous differences as to church polity among various Puritan groups, it is important to note that they, in contrast to the sixteenth century Anglicans, believed that the Scriptures clearly set forth the true and only valid form of church organization. They asserted that the form and order of the ecclesiastical society had been ordained by God, and that men are obliged to follow the pattern he has established. The Puritan concern for reformation grew out of their desire to restore "that ancient order and government which Christ hath instituted." Separatists, presbyterians, and congregationalists all argued in favor of "the true ancient and primatiue paterne" of church order according to God's Word.

The fact that their conclusions as to precisely what order the Old Testament and the New Testament advocated varied so radically may indicate that they resorted to the Bible to find justification for preconceived notions of the ecclesiastical society rather than to form their views deductively from an examination of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, for the Puritans generally the church order was not only established by God and made known in the Bible, but it is incumbent upon faithful Christians to follow that prescribed pattern in all times and at all places.

This Puritan viewpoint differed from the position of the Episcopalians in the sixteenth century, who maintained that the form of the ecclesiastical order depended in large part upon the time, place, and circumstances. Whitgift categorically stated that there is "no one certain and perfect kind of government prescribed or commanded in the Scriptures to the Church of Christ."[1] *Even* Richard Hooker in his monumental work on ecclesiastical polity presented the broad principle that ecclesiastical order and government are largely a matter of expediency. He seemed in no way obliged to defend the episcopal government as necessary, though he clearly felt it to be an excellent and fitting order for England.[2]

But in a day when the Word of God assumed such a high authority, the established church of England found itself at a disadvantage in its struggle against the non-conformists who were able to present a more or less plausible case that their form of church order was *jure*

---

[1] Whitgift,John, *Works*, II. p.213.
[2] Hooker, R., *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book III.

divino. Instead of remaining on the defensive the Anglican leaders were driven to assert that episcopacy was instituted by God and practised in the early church.[1]

Whereas in answer to the Puritan "Admonition to Parliament" John Whitgift wrote in 1572 that "the same form of government cannot be now, or ought to be, that was in the apostles time,"[2] in 1593 Richard Bancroft unhesitatingly affirmed that the Church of England "is in my conscience truly Apostolicall, and far to be preferred before any other that is received this day by an Reformed Church in Christendome."[3] The same year Thomas Bilson in writing against those who advocate the "changeable regiment of Presbyters" protests "we must not frame what kind of regiment we list, but rather obserue and marke what maner of externall gouernement the Lord best liked."[4] He then proceeds to show that the church of God from Adam "downeward" has been governed by an inequality of pastors and teachers under a "paternall" government. Other Anglican leaders soon followed suit,[5] but the non-conformists having taken the initiative continued to press their views for reform "according to God's Word."

---

[1] Bronkema (*The Essence of Puritanism*, p.55) and Fisher (*Discussions in History and Theology*, p.355) both conclude that it was the presbyterian view of church government based upon the Scriptures which led to the teaching of the divine right of episcopacy. Episcopacy *jure divino* seems to have been first advocated in the last decade of the sixteenth century.

[2] Whitgift, *Works*, II. p.278.

[3] Bancroft, R., *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline* (1593), To the Reader.

[4] Bilson, T., *The Perpetual Governement of Christes Chvrch* (1593), p.3.

[5] Matthew Sutclifee and Thomas Rogers were among those who early supported this view. Of course, by Laud's time it was more common. Laud in his speech in the Star-chamber at the censure of Bastwick, Burton and Prynne first categorically affirms "the calling of bishops is *jure divino*," and then significantly adds, "suppose our callings, as bishops, could not be made good *jure divino*, by divine right; yet *jure ecclesiastico*, by ecclesiastical right it cannot be denied." (*Harleian Miscellany*, vol. IX p.205)

Three Major Puritan Groups

Protests and dissensions regarding church worship existed from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. At first vestments and ritual were largely scrupled against. Many of the Marian exiles returning from their first-hand experience and contact with reformed churches on the continent were concerned over the numerous remnants of Roman worship which still clung to the established discipline of the English church service. However, the first real challenge to the polity of the state church was made by the "Disciplinarians," led by Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers. The "Admonition to Parliament" (1572) framed by some of the men in this group was their charter setting forth the evils of the existing system and urging reformation along lines of presbyterianism, which was described as agreeing with the practice of the primitive Christian churches. This "first open manifesto of the Puritan party"[1] called upon Parliament to "perfectly plant" the discipline "which Christ hath commanded and commended to his church."[2]

These men sought reform not only from within the church, but they looked to Parliament to effect it. Fundamentally they still held to the idea of a national church, but they wished to substitute presbyterian government by elders in place of the hierarchical pattern of government by bishops. Advocates of the presbyterian system continued to write and appeal for church reform through the succeeding years and to claim that "all the Churches we read of in the New Testament were Aristocratically and Presbyterially gouerned. Christ gave the Keys to the Apostles and Presbyters only."[3] Presbyterianism was clearly regarded by its adherents as God's orginance. In 1646 a sympathetic Parliament finally did authorize a presbyterian system for the state church in England though the establishment was short lived.[1]

---

[1] Frere,W. (ed.), Puritan Manifestoes, p.vii.
[2] ibid., p.19 ("Admonition to Parliament")
[3] Bastwick,J., Independency not Gods Ordinance (1645) p.12.

A second group of reformers was separatist by conviction. They were persons so overwhelmed by the corruptions in the church and so tired of waiting for Parliament to undertake reforms that they undertook to establish separate assemblies. The title of Robert Browne's tract, Reformation without tarrying for anie, clearly states their frame of mind. They could not continue in fellowship with the established church and therefore proceeded to organize their own congregations. Separatists were abused, slandered, reviled and persecuted in print and in person. Henry Barrow and John Greenwood were hanged in 1593 when their doctrines were judged to be seditious and a threat to the state. Others, like Browne, Harrison, and later Francic Johnson, Henry Ainsworth, John Smyth, Richard Clyfton, and John Robinson, along with their respective followers, fled to Holland where there was greater freedom of worship and where they established the way of worship and church order their consciences led them to believe to be necessary. Separatism again became particularly evident in England in the years just prior to the civil war and its adherents were a part of the amorphous forces of Independency in the ensuing years.

A third group concerned with reformation appeared in the late years of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth and has been aptly described by Burrage as "Non-separatist Congregationalism."[2] By their contemporaries they were often referred to in general terms as "non-conformists" or "Independents" and were sometimes confused with the separatists. The theory of church order held by this group paralleled that of the separatists by emphasizing that true churches are particular congregations empowered to choose their own officers and govern themselves.[1] But in opposition to the separatists they refused to break away entirely from communion with the English church. They regarded the church of England not to be a false church but a corrupt church needing reformation. Notwithstanding "sundry defects and dangerous corruptions" to be found in the English assemblies, these congregationalists looked upon them as true churches.

---

[1] Cf. An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament For the Present setling..Of the Presbyteriall Government.June 6,1646.

[2] Burrage,C., Early English Dissenters, I. p.287.

On the other hand, this group of congregationalists followed the presbyterians in their advocacy of church officers (pastor, elders, deacons) and in their placing the government of the church primarily in the hands of the elders. Because of their position between outright separatists and presbyterians, these congregationalists were subjected to criticism from all sides. Many of them migrated to Holland and to America to escape persecution and there established their idea of the proper form of the church.

And yet representatives of each of these three Puritan groups adopted in their own way the idea of covenant to the church. Covenant marked a reconciliation between God and man. Why could it not as well bind God and a group of believers as God and one individual? It seemed as natural to interpret the covenant as the way of salvation and of reformation for the spiritual society as for the single believer. The presbyterian application of the covenant to the church took the form of a national covenant, while the congregational and separatist application was that which was more properly called a "church covenant."

---

[1] The non-separating congregationalists denied the democratic form of church government proposed by Robert Browne and insisted on a government of monarchy (Christ), aristocracy (elders) and democracy (people) jointly combined. But the real power lay in the hands of the elders, and in this they were not different from some strains of separatists, such as Barrow and his followers.

Like the Episcopalians, the presbyterians conceived of the church as essentially a national body composed of all persons in the country. They wished to substitute synods for bishops, but they were interested in seeing presbyterianism recognized as the established state church. The congregationalists and separatists, on the other hand, defined the church as a particular congregation composed of believers who have engaged in a public profession of their faith. Despite the difference regarding complete separation from the English church, both congregationalists and separatists believed that church was a true church whose members engaged in a public covenant with one another and with God to form a church fellowship.

Most covenant theologians admitted the idea of both a "private covenant" between God and man and a "public" covenant between God and his church. This "public" covenant might take the form of a national covenant, as it did for the presbyterians, or of a particular church covenant, as for the congregationalists and separatists. The outward and public nature of this covenant differentiates it from the personal and private covenant between God and each believer. It is the "external consociation" of God and his people.[1] All who are in the visible church are thereby considered "outwardly" in covenant with God.[2] These different Puritan groups would agree that to be God's people outwardly requires some form of outward profession which represents man's consent to enter this social covenant with God.[1]

---

[1] Ball, Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.24.

[2] Perkins, Works, III. p.292; Ball, op. cit., p.202; Barrow, A Plaine Refutation, pp.89-90.

One fundamental reason for reformation, offered especially by separatists but also by others, was that upon Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne no protestation or covenant had been entered into by the church to indicate the inauguration of a reformed Protestant church in the nation in place of the Roman Catholic establishment during Mary's reign. Consequently it was maintained that the English church had never been "rightly gathered to Christ." For example, Barrow's criticism of the church of England was that

> "they have not been wonne unto the faith by the preaching of the gospell, neyther ever made willing covenāt to walk uprightly before the Lord; but were drawen by civil force in the beginning of her Maiesties reigne."[2]

The Puritans sought to remedy this important oversight by entering into a covenant signifying separation from the Roman church and allegiance to the acceptable reformed church as instituted by God. This need to "purify" the churches of England by a solemn affirmation jointly entered into by members lay behind the advocacy of "public" covenants by separatists, congregationalists, and presbyterians alike.

The National Church Covenant

The idea of a national covenant was closely aligned to and was a logical outgrowth of the covenant of grace. Covenant theology spoke of a people in covenant with God being God's people. And the Old Testament provided ample illustrations for believing that the covenant concept might well include the whole nation.

---

[1] Cf. Perkins, Works, III. p.520 and Ball, op. cit., p.250.

[2] Barrow, H., Mr Henry Barrowes Platform (1593) p.52.

The idea of a national covenant was not, however, a political so much as a religious covenant. It was espoused by the Presbyterians who conceived of the church as co-extensive with the national community, although they disavowed any control of the church by the state. But it was natural for them to think of the nation entering covenant with God to be God's people and to form the church according to God's appointed pattern. Suggestions that the nation enter into covenant with God to reform itself and to bind it closer to God were made periodically, and this view reached its climax with the adoption by Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of Divines of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643.

Behind the need for reformation urged by all Puritans was the commonly held deduction drawn from the Scriptures that trouble and disaster among a people was an indication of God's disfavor and punishment. Calvin had asserted that pestilence, war, and other such calamities were chastisements of God "which he inflicts for our sins."[1] Perkins in discussing the same idea took occasion to list the sins of England which made that nation unworthy of God's love.[2] In a similar vein Thomas Taylor reminds his readers that "the people of Israel, when they stuck close to God and his Religion, prospered; but when they forsook God, and fell to Idolatry, they fell into affliction, and brought trouble on themselves."[3] These men drew a direct correlation between unfortunate events and God's punishment. As Gataker put it, "Mans sinne and Gods wrath are as needle and thread; the one maketh way for the other."[1]

---

[1] Calvin, J., Tracts, II. p.106.

[2] Perkins, Works, III. p.420. The sins Perkins names are (1) ignorance of God's will and worship; (2) contempt of Christian Religion; (3) blasphemy, many ways; (4) prophanation of the Sabbath; (5) unjust dealing in bargaining between man and man.

[3] Taylor, T., Works, p.2

This meant that a nation flourishes when religion flourishes. The conclusion therefore drawn by the presbyterians is that if the people covenant to hold fast to God "we shall from henceforth certainly expect prosperity unto this Kingdom and Nation."[2] God's anger at his people can only be remedied by their repentance and thorough reformation. This interpretation of tragedy as the sign of God's ill-will and as therefore demanding reformation was keenly felt in the civil war period. Typical of the times was the conclusion reached by Gregory Thins in his The Protestant Informer when lamenting the "bloudy distractions of the kingdome" and this "unnaturall warre," he points out that while "we all complaine of our present misery...few of us consider seriously of the cause...whence these distractions come." He then proceeds to point out that

> "sin is the only cause of every affliction, and all punishments..Wee by our sinnes have provoked God to anger and God sheweth his anger...God causeth us to punish one another; He doth it either to reforme us or to destroy us."[3]

The heightening of the sense of calamity because of developments in the religious and political areas made more necessary the calling of people into right relation to God. Several requests for a national covenant between God and the people were made to Parliament in the years prior to the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant. These earlier evidences of interest in the national covenant as a way of bringing the nation and the church into harmony with God's ways are illustrative of the presbyterian concern for reformation. The political events of 1642-3 which led to the taking of a national covenant built upon a background and experience through which the national covenant idea had become known.

---

[1] Gataker, T., Sermons, p.49.

[2] The Diurnall Occvrrences of every dayes proceeding in Parliament.. January to March 1628. (London, 1641) p.9.

[3] Thins, Gregory, The Protestant Informer (1643) p.1.

One early appeal for a national covenant is found in an address by "Mr. Rosse" before Parliament January 20, 1628 concerning religion and against "the see of Rome" and "the interest of Arminianisme." In his speech Rosse urges

> "let us now with an unanimous consent of us all, resolve to make a vow and covenant henceforth to hold fast our God and our Religion, and..to this covenant let every one say, Amen."[1]

Either unacquainted with the above incident or overlooking it, John Canne reports that a Dr. Burgess in a sermon before Commons on November 17, 1640 was the first man to desire openly and to urge a national covenant.[2]

On still another occasion John Wray, mentioning his "feare that God is angry with our Nationall likewarme temper,"[3] asked Commons on May 3, 1641 for a national covenant with God and the king "if ever wee intend to perfect and finish the great works we have begun and come to our journeys end." He suggests

> "first bind our selves by a Parliamentary and Nationall Oath...to preserve our Religion entire and pure, without the least compound of Superstition or Idolatry: next to defend the defender of the Faith, his Royall person, Crowne, and dignity, and maintaine our Soveraigne in his glory and splendour, which can never be eclipsed, if the ballance of justice goe right, and his lawes be duly executed."[4]

---

[1] The Diurnall Occvrrences... (1641) p.9.
[2] Canne, John, The Snare is Broken (1649) p.11.
[3] Wray, John, Eight Occasional Speeches...(1641) p.2.
[4] ibid., p.12.

In conclusion Wray states, "thus doing, Mr. Speaker, and making Jerusalem our chiefest joy, we shall be a blessed Nation, and a happy People."[1]

None of these pleas stipulate the establishment of a particular kind of church organization, but the underlying assumption in each falls under the presbyterian pattern. Each arose from a sense of incomplete reformation in religion, and is based on the idea that a nation practising "true religion" and being correctly related to God will prosper. In each, furthermore, religious and political matters are jointly considered.

Another demand to enter into a "Religious Covenant," "our dangers being great and our sinnes greater," was made in the proposition of the city of London to Parliament in 1642, which proposal the Parliament merely promised to consider.[2] All of these — and undoubtedly there are others — add evidence that a national covenant was advocated and discussed for some years prior to its actual adoption. The feeling must have been growing that "Gods businesse" was being neglected and that other matters were preferred before him.[3] Until religion was rightly ordered and established, it was felt that there could be no sound foundation upon which peace in the nation could be built. Confusion and controversy in matters of religion were held directly responsible for the ills of the nation. According to Thomas Taylor, Presbyterians not only maintained "there is but one true God and so but one true Religion," but also that "diversity in Religion breedeth the worst blood in the State that can be." "From the diversity of religion arises warres and tumults, seditions and massacres, to the ruine of the most famous States."[1] Religious reformation was held essential to political well-being, and a covenant was urged as the way reform could most readily be accomplished. Since religious diversity can only mean calamity and ruin, then the establishment of "true religion" -- according to presbyterian principles -- by covenant would bring order and peace.

---

[1] Wray, op. cit., pp.12-13.
[2] The Cities Proposition, and the Parliaments Ansvver (London,1642)
[3] Cf. Rosse before Parliament, The Diurnall Occvrences (1641).

Andrew Perne, preaching before Commons May 31, 1643, affirmed that "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his owne." Advising Commons to take heed of the "false gods" kept and worshipped in "private families and houses here in England," Perne recommends that Commons "search England with Candles, till you finde out all the abominations which are committed in secret."[2] On another occasion Edmund Calamy pointed out in a sermon to the House of Lords, June 15, 1643, "God never yet destroyed a Nation wherein there were so many of his children praying, fasting, humbling themselves," and therefore reminds his hearers that if a natinn be in the process of reforming and "if they endeavour to doe these things with all their heart and soule" which they promised in the covenant entered into when they were baptized, then there is still hope for the nation.[3] Both of these men are calling for a thorough reformation in the nation. The two alternatives,they suggest,are either reformation by a national covenant or ruin of the country. "If God did never destroy a Reforming Nation, never wholly transplant a Reforming Church then will he not do so to us, because we are such."[4] England's

---

1.Taylor, op. cit., pp.1,2.
2.Perne,A., Gospell Courage (1643) p.13.
3.Calamy,E., The Noble-Mans Patterne of true and real Thankfulnesse (1643) p.56.
4.Palmer,H.,The Necessity and Encouragement of Utmost Venturing for the Churches Help (1643) p.60.

need, according to John Lightfoot, is "Reformation and Reconciliation."[1] This is the remedy to "our sorrows," and the only basis whereby the divisions in church,state, families, opinions, and affections can be healed. Parliament, he contends, must "carry through Reformation before it can bring our Israel to the desired Canaan."[2]

With this concern over divisions within the kingdom and the need for thorough reformation in religion, a frequent comparison was drawn between England and Israel. Not only are the common ills of the two nations listed, but the way in which God has favored both nations is emphasized. One of the most detailed of these comparisons was made by John Bond who claimed to see the English state "expressed in the Iewish in a glasse." Just as they were God's selected people,

> "so are we thus farre, being the only Monarchy and Kingdome of pure Protestants, now standing upon the face of the Earth; for all other people are either no Christians, no pure Protestants, or no Kingdome and Monarchy."[3]

Bond's pean of praise and pride in England reaches its climax in his statement

> "we may call our Briton the Island of Jehovah (or Gods Island) because of the manifold Protections, Preventions, Deliverances, Blessings, spiritual, politic, and Ecclesiasticall, so little lesse than miraculously conferred on us."[4]

He then proceeds to enumerate parallels between the way England recently has been delivered from the perils of "Romish Egypt" and the way the children of Israel were delivered from bondage in Pharoah's Egypt.

Puritans generally had a strong sense of God's special favor and care. The blessings which God has poured "upon this, our land and

---

[1] Lightfoot, J., Elias Redivivus (1643) p.7.
[2] ibid., p.21.
[3] Bond,J., A Doore of Hope (1641) p.2.
[4] ibid., pp.11-12.

and people of England," wrote John Milton, are so many and wonderful "that of necessity we must acknowledge that as with Israel and Iudah, so with us the Lord hath dealt towitt, that as the girdle cleaveth to the loynes of a man, so hath the Lord tyed himself to the whole nation, that we might be his people."[1]

But if England is compared to Israel as a nation favored of God, and if God has "tyed himself" to this people, the woeful state of affairs in the nation plainly speaks of a controversy which the Lord has with the inhabitants of the land. To be delivered from these evils a true and thorough reformation must be undertaken and God made the God of the people anew. As John Bond writes,

> "we looke upon the history of the Lords owne people during the reignes of their best Kings, and wee shall finde that such sacred Nationall Obligations (by Vow, Covenant, and Association) were the chiefest ingredients, if not very foundations of their greatest Deliverances and Reformations."[2]

The parallel between Israel and England evokes the return to the same method which proved so successful in Israel's experience, namely the taking of a covenant between the people and God. The roots of the national covenant idea lay in the example of Israel.

The Vow or Protestation which Parliament took in May 1641 was likened by some to a national covenant, and in a sense it might be regarded as a forerunner to the Solemn League and Covenant. The persons accepting this earlier declaration vowed "to maintain and defend ...the true reformed Protestant religion expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England," to "maintain and defend His Majesty's person and estate," and "the power and priviledge of Parliaments."[3] The purpose of the Protestation seems to have been to clarify the position of Parliament at a time when "endeavours have been, and are used, to bring the English army into a misunderstanding of this Parliament." But to John Bond, who compares it to an Israelite covenant, the Protestation may prove "a stronger Rampire and Defense to our Religion, King, Lawes and Liberties, then all those foure Seas which doe mote in this Island."[1]

---

[1] Milton, J., Reformation of Christian Religion (1641) To the Reader.

[2] Bond, op. cit., p.102.

[3] Gardiner, S.R., The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1628-1660. pp.84-85.

Thomas Case points out that this Protestation removes

> "Englands reproach among the Churches...that we were never separated from Rome by solemne Covenant and Protestation as other Reformed Churches in Germanie, France, Scotland, &c who were therefore called Protestants, because they did solemnly protest against the Pope, and enter a religious Covenant to separate from all his antichristian usurpations."[2]

But the Protestation did not suffice for the developing political situation and in 1643 the House of Commons took the Solemn League and Covenant and exhorted the nation likewise to take it.

It might be proper to review briefly the situation which confronted Parliament at this time. England in 1643 was rent by civil strife; the king had fled London for Oxford; peace and order were rapidly disintegrating. Under the circumstances an agreement with Scotland appeared strategic and necessary both in order to forestall attack from that northern country and to secure, if possible, aid in the struggle against the Royalists. But the Scotch were unwilling to come to the aid of the Parliamentary party unless England officially accepted and proclaimed the presbyterian church polity. Parliament had as yet given little or no thought to what the proper church order should be. There was a strong presbyterian group in Parliament, but also supporters of other viewpoints. But in order to secure Scottish aid Parliament decided somewhat unwillingly to accept the idea of a national covenant but to so word it that presbyterianism was not explicitly mentioned. The taking of this covenant by the representatives of both nations was highly regarded as a bond of mutual friendship and peace and a sure sign of God's favor upon these island countries.

---

[1] Bond, op. cit., p.104.

[2] Case, T., Gods Waiting to be Gracious vnto His People (1642) p.69.

There is little question but that England's acceptance of the national covenant was the price paid for Scotch aid at the crucial period of the outbreak of the English civil war. It was a covenant which was dictated directly by political expediency and influenced both by the example of the national covenants of Scotland and by the presbyterian view of a national church covenanting with the Lord to be his faithful people.

The subscribing to the Covenant on September 25,1643 by Commons and the Assembly of Divines met together was a momentous and solemn occasion.

> "...the House met at the usual place, and thence went with their Speaker to the Church, the Assembly also at the same time with their Prolocutor. A Psalme being sung, solemne prayer was made, after the prayer an exhortation to the Honourable House and Reverend Divines encouraging them to this work as a work of marvellous high nature and concernment. This being made, Mr. Alexander Henderson, one of the Commissioners sent from the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, being also desired thereunto, made a Speech to the like purpose.
>
> "Then the Covenant was read, notice being first given to the Assembly that after the hearing of it, each person should immediately by swearing, worship the great Name of God, and testifie so much outwardly by lifting up their hands: which was done very solemnly and with so much joy seen in their countenances, and manifested by clapping of their hands, as was suitable

to the gravity of such a worke, and the sadnesse of the present times."[1]

What did they covenant? Philip Nye, who delivered the exhortation at the signing ceremony, believed it was essentially a covenant for reformation.

> "What doe we vow? Is it not the preservation of Religion, where it is reformed, and the Reformation of Religion, where it needs? Is it not the Reformation of three Kingdomes, and a Reformation universall, Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship, in whatsoever the Word shall discover unto us?..And all this to be done according to God's word, the best Rule, and according to the best Reformed Churches, the best interpretors of this rule.."[2]

For Nye the Covenant laid the foundation stone in making "the kingdom of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ." The Covenant enables us "to preserve and defend our religion against our common enemies," the chief of which are Popery and Prelacy.[3] Swearing to the Covenant he warns "is not the lifting up of the hand for a day, but an honest and faithfull endeavouring after the contents of this Covenant all our dayes."[4] While Nye implies that other covenants have been taken before, he pleads that this one be more scrupulously kept.

> "..I beseech you to be more watchfull, and stirre up your hearts with more industry this day than ever before; as it is the last oath you are likely to take in this kinde, so is it our last refuge...If this helpe us not, we are likely to remaine to our dying day an unhappy people."[5]

Alexander Henderson, the Scotch Commissioner, spoke immediately preceeding the taking of the Covenant, and described it as

---

[1] White, John, The Covenant (1643) p.16.
[2] ibid., p.14.
[3] ibid., p.17.
[4] ibid., p.21.
[5] ibid., pp.20-21.

"a religious Covenant" entered into with God and amongst men, in which God first lifts up his hand to the people taking the Covenant and says "I am the Lord your God," and secondly, "he stretcheth out his hand against his Enemies and theirs." Henderson assures his hearers that ample precedent is offered for the Covenant "not onely of the people of God of old, of the Reformed Churches of Germany, and the Low-Countreys; but of our own Noble and Christian Progenitors in the time of the danger of Religion, which is expressed in the Covenant it selfe."[1] In summary he affirms,

> "It is the best work of Faith, to joyn in Covenant with God; the best work of love and Christian Communion, to joyn in Covenant for Reformation; the best work of true loyalty, to joyn in Covenant for the preservation of our King and Superiours; and the best proofe of natural affection...to joyn in Covenant for defence of our Native Countrey, Liberties, and Lawes."[2]

These are "the necessary ends" of the Covenant. For Henderson, as for Nye, the reformation of religion is made the basis of order in the political and social life of the land.

Turning to the text of the Covenant itself, the "Noblemen, Barons, Knights, Gentlemen, Citizens, Burgesses, Ministers of the Gospell, and Commons of all sorts in the Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland," swear to six things. First,

> "That wee shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the Grace of God endeavour in our severall Places and Callings, the preservation of the Reformed Religion in the Church of Scotland...the Reformation of Religion in the Kingdomes of England and Ireland, in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches."

---

[1] White, op. cit., p.28

[2] ibid., pp.27-28.

Secondly,

> "That we shall in like manner without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy...Superstition, Heresies, Schisms, Prophaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound Doctrine, and the power of Godlinesse..."

Thirdly,

> "We shall with the same Sincerity, Reality, and Constancy, in our severall Vocations; endeavour with our Estates and Lives, mutually to preserve the Rights and Priviledges of Parliaments, and the Liberties of the Kingdomes: And to preserve, and defend the Kings Majesties Person, and Authority, in the preservation and defence of the true Religion and Liberties of the Kingdome..."

Fourth,

> "We shall also with all faithfulnesse endeavour the discovery of all such as have beene, or shall be Incendiaries, Malignants, or evill instruments, by hindering the Reformation of Religion, dividing the King from his People, or one of the Kingdomes from another, or making any Faction, or Parties amongst the People, contrary to this League and Covenant..."

Fifth,

> "And whereas the happinesse of a blessed Peace between these Kingdomes, denyed in former times to our Progenitors, is by the good providence of God granted unto us, we shall each one of us according to our Place and Interest, endeavour, That they may remaine conjoyned in a firme Peace and Vnion to all posterity."

Sixth,

> "We shall also according to our Places and Callings in this Common Cause of Religion, Liberty, and Peace of the Kingdomes, assist and defend all those that enter into this League and Covenant, in the maintenance and pursuing thereof..."[1]

On the face of it this national covenant appears to have three main purposes. First, the reformation of religion "according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches." Here it is important to note that the religion of Scotland is considered reformed and therefore only needs preservation, while that of England and Ireland plainly must be changed. This offers a clear clue, if an additional one were needed, that presbyterianism is implied in this covenant.[1] Secondly, the covenant purposes the joining of Scotland, Engladd and Ireland in a pact of peace. Thirdly, the preservation of the rights and privileges of the Parliament, the person and authority of the King, and the liberties of the Kingdom are vouched for. Religiously speaking the Covenant aimed at establishing presbyterianism; politically speaking it was concerned to make peace in and between the respective kingdoms and to establish the authority of the Parliament in England.

---

[1] White, op. cit., pp.1-6.

But the League and Covenant had hardly been adopted before differences of opinion arose as to what it intended, and to what uses it should be put. The earliest controversy related to the nature and extent of the religious reformation which is to be instituted. Alexander Henderson, in a sermon before Commons three months later, refers to "your begun reformation," but feels that the covenant has not been widely accepted. He infers that energy which might well be expended to carry through on the covenant was diverted to controversies between political-religious parties.[2] It is probably this situation to which John Drury had reference some years later when he remarked that he was solemnly obligated by the Covenant, before God, to "advance the public ways of reformation," but insists that the intent of the Covenant was to further "religion and righteousness and reformation and peace, in church and common-wealth," and not "to become serviceable to any one party against another."[1]

---

[1] Note Alexander Henderson's comment that the Covenant insures "the deliverance" of England and Ireland, and "the preservation" of the church and kingdom of Scotland. White, op. cit., pp.31-32.

[2] Henderson, A., A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons, At their late Solemne Fast, Wednesday, December 27, 1643. London, 1644.

Basically the difference of opinion revolved upon whether or not the purpose of the Covenant was to establish presbyterian church government. The text of the Covenant, calling for the reformation of religion"according to God's word and the practice of reformed churches," was one which both Presbyterians and Independents could accept. But each interpreted it in his own way. The Presbyterians confidently assumed that only presbyterianism could fulfill the specification of being consonant with God's word and the example of reformed churches. The Independents denied the Presbyterian contention and concluded, as Henry Burton affirms, "so long as our Reformation is to be reduced to and regulated by the word of God...the Nation is by the Covenant engaged for Independencie."[2] For all its avowed good intent of establishing unity through thorough reformation the Covenant resulted in no more agreement in matters of religion than before, and in fact, itself became a center of controversy.

Sometime in May 1646 the Lord Mayor, Alderman, and Commons of the City of London in a petition to Parliament expressed great concern

> "at the swarmes of sectaries which discover themselves everywhere, who, if by their endeavours, they should get into places of Profit and Trust, in Martiall and Civill affaires, it may tend much to the disturbance of the

---

[1] "A Case of Conscience Resolved: Concerning Ministers Meddling with State Matters in their Sermons...By J.D." London, 1649. Harleian Miscellany, vol. II. p.551.

[2] Burton, H., A Vindication of Churches (1644) p.43.

Publick Peace, both of the Church and Commonwealth."[1] Recalling to Parliament their vows made in the Covenant they urged "the suppressing of all private and separate Congregations."

Parliament agreed to take the petition under "serious and speedy consideration," but there soon appeared "A Moderate Reply to the Cities Remonstrance." setting forth reasons why "many well affected Citizens cannot assent thereunto." This tract takes issue with the London City petition for stating that the Covenant implies "a down-right suppression of allthose who out either of weak or tender consciences, cannot fully submit unto Presbyteriall government." This anonymous author continues, "most evident it is, that the end of the Covenant was not at all a rigid exaction of a forced uniformity unto Presbyterian government, upon the subjects of England."[2] He points out that it would be impossible for Parliament "to swear themselves, and enforce the people to covenant a subjection unto that Church government w^ch they, nor the people, did not at that time understand." Moreover, if they did understand this form of church government, why he asks "hath the Assembly been searching out the will of God about church government ever since the imposition hereof?"

It is this author's contention that neither the Covenant itself, nor Parliament since, intended that presbyterian government is meant. Rather he concludes, "here is no positive determination of any thing, but an engagement into an inquisition after the best; and the word of God to be our chiefe informer and director herein."[3]

He denies that the church established in Scotland need be the pattern for England, even if the two countries are bound by the same Covenant, for

---

[1] The Cities Proposition and the Parliaments Answer. London, 1646.
[2] A Moderate Reply to the Cities Remonstrance (1646) p.3.
[3] ibid., p.4

> "in case this Kingdome finde out a more perfect way of Church Government, according to the word of God, then that Kingdome of Scotland hath done, wee are bound (we say) more to perswade and reason them over, to conformitie with us, then in such a case, to conform to them."[1]

His final plea is for freedom of conscience in religion, for he interprets the Covenant as guaranteeing that freedom rather than establishing one acceptable way to which the nation should conform.

It is hardly surprising that "A Moderate Reply..." was shortly answered by "A Vindication of the London Remonstrance...", the main argument of which is to affirm that "Presbyteriall government is _jure divino_, and must not be changed."[2]

> "...if Presbyteriall government be the nearest to the rule of Gods word as it may and hath been sufficiently proved then those that will not joyn with us in that way to worship the Lord are not worthy to live amongst us, for when the Church of God entred into the like Covenant to seek the Lord as we have done; mark _whosoever will not seek the Lord God of Israel_ shall be slain..."[3]

This writer is certain that presbyterian government is clearly meant in the Covenant and argues that if the Covenant needed further explanation, "it was as unlawfull to be taken as that of the Prelates with the _et cetera_ in it."[4]

The controversy did not stop here. John Bellamie wrote "A Vindication of the Humble Remonstrance..." (London,1646) and he was in turn answered in "The City Remonstrance Remonstrated..By I.P." (London, 1646). In this answer "I.P." asks,

> "..did our Covenant bind us to suppresse all the holy, godly, conscientious sons and daughters of God, which

---

[1] _A Moderate Reply to the Cities Remonstrance_, p.4.
[2] _A Vindication of the London Remonstrance_ (London,1646) p.5.
[3] _ibid._, p.3
[4] _ibid._, p.5.

> were but even disaffected to Presbyteriall government? If so, bold am I to affirme, that Londons care to keep the covenant, Will become Londons ruine; a bloody, cruell, cursed, Covenant, if that be the meaning of it, but confident I am, as there is no such thing exprest in the Covenant, so no such meaning can be rationally gathered there from and therefore it is not the Covenant, but such an interpretation that is here impleaded."[1]

John Bellamie again took up his pen to reply in "A Iustification of the City Remonstrance," in which he now admits that

> "though Presbyteriall government be not nominally, and in verbu in the Covenant, yet I hope without offence, it may be said that it is concordable to the Covenant, as being nearest to that government which the best reformed Churches doe practise, and that by our Covenant we are bound to endeavour the settlement of."[2]

The vague phrase "according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed Churches" which a cautious Parliament had inserted in place of the Scotch demand for the word "Presbyterian" in the original wording of the Covenant became a matter of serious disagreement among Presbyterians and Independents. The Presbyterians railed against "Church-ranting Sismaticks and Hereticks" who "tear in pieces the visible Church of Christ,"[3] "those disturbers of the quiet and peace both of Church and States,"[4] The Independents continued to argue for religious freedom and to oppose the establishment of one church pattern. By 1646 it was evident that the Covenant had failed to resolve the differences in matters of church government. And Parliament's adoption of presbyterianism as the form of the state church in 1647 in no sense settled the issue.

In the political realm the Covenant was also invoked by a Presbyterian Parliament against an Independent Army. In 1647 the Army had entered London, purged Parliament, and seized the King. The plight of London was compared to that of the city of Munster when it was possessed by the Anabaptists,[1] and England was warned

---

[1] The City Remonstrance Remonstrated, By. I.P. London,1646. p.21.
[2] Bellamie, J., A Iustification of the City Remonstrance. (1646) p.13.
[3] A Vindication of the London Remonstrance, (London,1646).
[4] Bellamie, J., A Vindication of the Humble Remonstrance (London,1646).

> "Awake England, Awake London, open your eyes, unstop your ears, look about you and consider those who intend to overthrow and alter the whole frame of Government, to change and subject the fundamental Laws of England to their fantasies."[2]
>
> "We have not a free Parliament, neither are you a free people, but are as sold, basely subjected and ruled over by club Law...you are made slaved not to Royal power, but to the Licentious wils of your fellow subjects..."[3]

In such extremities the Covenant is recalled. Has not England

> "entred into a solemn League and Covenant to preserve the Kings Person from all danger and violence..is not the Oath of God stil upon you?...have you not sworn and covenanted to maintain the Parliament of England in all their Just Priviledges? and is it not a breach of Parliament to have any of the Members driven out of the House by force of Arms?...Or did you take the Covenant with a mental reservation?...testifie the contrary by quitting your selves like men and cleaving close unto your Covenant in every particular branch thereof...But if you dally with your Covenant, know God will not be mocked, he can discover your secret intentions, and wil bring all the curses that he hath threatned to powre out upon a Covenant-breaking people, upon your selves, this land and nation, until the Kingdom be made desolate and wholly laid waste..."[4]

By the end of 1647 the National Covenant had become an instrument to maintain the status quo and to oppose the New Model Army and the Independents "who with the right hand have helped to pull down Babels high Tower, yet now with the left labor to set it up again." The Covenant had been intended to establish order and peace within the kingdom through reformation of religion, but whereas in 1643 the threat to "true religion" and the "rights and privileges of Parliament" was thought to come from the royalists and papists, now it was the sects who were characterized as the chief enemies of an orderly nation. The Covenant was considered a defence against the threat to the kingdom and to religion from the "swarmes of sectaries."

---

[1] cf. "Some Queries Propounded to the Common-Councill and Citizens of London,concerning the Armies Demand of having the Militia of London of the 4th of May changed." London, 1647.

[2] A True Alarvm to England..written by a faithful Friend.(London,1647) p.4.

[3] ibid., p.13

[4] ibid., pp.7,9,10.

For example, in 1646 Thomas Edwards in a bitter attack against the sects called upon the people "for a solemn renewal of the late Covenant" because in place of the "uniformity in doctrine, worship, discipline and Government" intended by the National Covenant "all these Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies, Schisms, and strange Practises...are among us."[1] The toleration of "Independency and Sectarism", according to Edwards, is a sign of the breach of the Covenant, and he regards it to be his mission to show how the sects have plotted "to cheat this Kingdom of the Presbyterial Government."[2] He mourns the sad state of England which has resulted in "deformation" instead of reformation, especially "after a Solemn Covenant and Oath to extirpate Heresie, Schism, and whatsoever is against sound Doctrine."[3]

The Presbyterians placed great hope in the idea of a national covenant to achieve the long awaited and necessary reformation. This is made clear in the eulogistic sermon of John Brinsley who defined the main purpose of the Solemn League and Covenant as "how we may keep close to God, and walk before him." Pointing to the covenant between God and the Jews, Brinsley asserts "the Lords People are all Covenanters."[4] In the covenant God promises "that hee will be their God...And they shall be his People, acknowledged of him, favoured by him;" what the people promise is "but an Eccho to the other, a Restipulation."[1] But, it may be objected, is not this what each believer has already bound himself to by baptism and the Lord's Supper? Why is it necessary to enter into the covenant anew? Brinsley replies that the people of Israel found it necessary to renew their Covenant and that this is "a practice frequent amongst the people of God," and especially so in instances of "defection and affliction." Surely, he continues, none present can suppose that there is any question but that the present situation in England warrants the people entering into Covenant.

---

[1] Edwards,Thomas, The First and Second Part of Gangraena (3rd ed. 1646) pp.97,102,105.
[2] ibid., p.72.
[3] ibid., pp.75-6
[4] Brinsley,J., The Saints Solemne Covenant with Their God (1644) p.6.

> "...our present Afflictions...our former Defection.. The Worship of God for the most part..turned to a meer formalitie...The heart of Religion being well nigh eaten out...Multitudes of scandalous persons swarming every where, and yet continued members of the Church ...Little Heate, little Life, little Power of Godlinesse to be felt or seene. And our Affliction at this day seems to answer it. Our case being now the very same with Israels in the days of King Asah...Now in this condition what shall wee doe? Why, Now let us joyne our selves to the Lord in a perpetuall Covenant."[2]

Never, continues Brinsley, was the Covenant "more seasonable, more needfull for any people, then it is for England at this day." He too urges that it be made a "perpetuall covenant" rather than a covenant "temporary, momentarie, soone forgotten."[3]

Some may object, writes Brinsley, that this Covenant "may seeme to be heterogeneall,,,Forraigne,and..of meer Civill concernment." He, however, is certain that "upon a review" it would be found that all these things tend to "that great and maine end," namely, the "joyning of ourselves to the Lord," and "thorough Reformation."[4] As regards the doctrine and discipline of the Scotch church, Brinsley offers the unique interpretation, "wee are not bound to *Observe*, but to *Preserve* it. Not to observe it *here*, but to preserve it there."[1] On the other hand, he spends some six pages castigating "heresie, Schism, Profaneness" and concluding that in the joining of Word and Sword, Minister and Magistrate in the Covenant "there may be some hope of extirpating of this bitter and deadly weed, which hath overrun, and almost overspread the whole Garden of God."[2] The important point of Brinsely's interpretation is that this national covenant is a covenant with God, taken by allwho wish to be God's people. Accepting this covenant is an act of religious committment; it is a covenant of grace,[3] manifesting itself nationally. And yet specifically it is clear that the covenant supports the presbyterian form of church and seeks to establish it for all. And yet his apologia cannot hide the undercurrent of resentment against this "foreign" medium which seeks to make the English churches conform to the Scotch.

---

[1] Brinsley, op. cit., p.8
[2] ibid., pp.14-15
[3] ibid., p.16
[4] ibid., p.17.

The Covenant received even more of an eulogy at the hands of John Saltmarsh, who hailed it as "the most glorious rise of a Reformation in any age."[4] He admits that people of God have taken covenants before, but he thinks "none that hath such a *Spirituall* and *Politicall* breadth in it" as this.[5] He exalts the fact of three kingdoms striking "a Sacred League" as being unique and insuring the durability of the Covenant.

Saltmarsh defines the purpose of the Covenant as seeking the advancement of God's Kingdom and feels that its principles "bring us closer to God, and consociates us with heaven."[1] In addition to this religious aim, which "will make a Kingdome holy and happy,"[2] he emphasizes the Covenant's "Politicall excellency" in that it intends "to keep the mixture even" by affirming "the preservation of Parliamentary rights, and Nationall rights, and Royall rights." Without being a plea for Presbyterianism or an attack on the sects, this tract generally praises the Covenant for its unique character and its power for reformation, both ecclesiastically and politically.

---

[1] Brinsley, *op. cit.*, p.20.
[2] *ibid.*, p.36.
[3] *ibid.*, p.28.
[4] Saltmarsh, J., *A Solemn Discourse Vpon the Sacred League and Covenant of both Kingdomes.*(1644), preface.
[5] *ibid.*, p.8.

While the Presbyterians consistently supported the Covenant, the Independents became more outspoken in their criticisms and offered sounder arguments against it. One such expression of opposition was written by John Canne, who offers to "fully and clearly prove" that the Covenant "was unlawfully given and taken," and that it is "the way of death: a Covenant contrary to Religion, Law and Reason."[3] It is "an enemie to Gods worship and true Religion; under the name of heresie and schisme, a meer design to stop the passage of many precious truths, and to hinder the Saints from Church-fellowship."[4]

Canne considers the Covenant internally contradictory in making a man swear to preserve the King's person and authority while

> "yet a little after he swears he will endeavour that ALL SUCH as shall be incendaries, Malignants, and evill instruments, may be brought to publick tryall, and receive condigne punishment, and here neither King, Queen, Prince, &c are exempted."[5]

So Canne affirms that the Covenant makes the taker "a Covenant-breaker one way or other."[1]

---

[1] Saltmarsh, op. cit., p.4.
[2] ibid., p.3
[3] Canne, John, The Snare is Broken (1649) p.1.
[4] ibid., p.1.
[5] ibid., p.2.

Furthermore, he denies that God's glory could possibly be "aymed at" in the Covenant, since the Covenant never had "any Scripture bottome" and was only similar in name to the covenants of Asa, Josiah, and Nehemiah.[2] "This Covenant," he contends, "is a new thing, an earthly creature, not warranted by the Word of God, but sprung out mans foolish brain."[3] He accuses the Covenant of being against "the good of the soul" in swearing regarding "Scots Church discipline" and not even knowing what it is.

> "Now if this be not to impose Laws upon Conscience, and to bear a lordly sway over the minde...then was there never an humane law imposed upon the Conscience ...That is justly done which is done knowingly: but what ignorantly, that is done unjustly."[4]

He doubts whether the people of England have "showed themselves more irrational and stupid" then to have "sworn to do that thing which they know not to this day what it is, nor how, or which way to act in reference to the oath which they have taken."

Not only is the Covenant against God's glory and the people's own good, but, says Canne, it is against the good of neighbors, "against publick safetie, because it occasioned a general commotion, and set the people of the Land causelessly to destroy one another."[5] It has served to encourage the divisions and the strife in the land. The Presbyterians under the Covenant "think themselves bound to engage against the Church and people of God, and to seek their utter ruin, under the name of schisme and heresie." The Independents "conceive they have as much

---

1. Canne, ibid., p.1.
2. ibid., p.5
3. ibid., p.40.
4. ibid., p.6
5. ibid., p.7.

reason by the Covenant to oppose them," while the "Cavileers" swearing to preserve and defend the King's person "conclude they may lawfully destroy them both." On top of this "our Brethren of Scotland" challenge "by the Covenant a power to settle our Church and State, and to spoil us in our persons, estates, consciences, if we refuse to conform to their rules and orders." Thus, concludes Canne

> "is the Covenant become an Achan, a troubler, a firebrand in the Nation, and serves no other use, but to make division, keep open the breach of differences, and to strengthen the opposing parties one against the other, till in the end they are quite undone on all sides."[1]

It is difficult to imagine "how any man could imagine that this Oath was for peace" and that it would end the differences between parties.[2]

Especially does Canne express great concern that in the covenant people swear to that which they know not. As for heresy and schism, he asks, "can any man to this day tell what is intended thereby? "I do not know that the High Court of Parliament hath any where declared what they mean by heresie and schisme."[3] Being told that he must take an oath against heresy and schism, the Covenanter is "blindly brought into the pit, then come our Brethren of Scotland with a cathedral infallibilitie in defining causes of faith, and tell him that Brownists, Anabaptists, Independents, with others, such and such are intended..He must judge them hereticks and schismaticks, for that he hath taken the Covenant,and our brethren say they are so."[4]

> "It is onely a Presbyterian private conceit..to say that the Covenant binds to preserve the worship, discipline and government of that Church...the Parliament

---

[1] Canne, op. cit., p.7.
[2] ibid., p.17.
[3] ibid., p.14.
[4] ibid., pp.3-4.

> hath not any where (to my knowledge) acknowledged it to be jure divino, neither is any man tyed by that Covenant to submit to it, or to endeavour the promoting thereof."[1]

In this statement Canne specifically repudiates the idea that the purpose of the Covenant is to establish the presbyterian way. Again he challenges presbyterian views when he denies any Scripture rule for the Magistrate "to require an oath of the people that they shall embrace this way, or that thing in matters of Religion."[2] Not only, according to Canne, was there no "compulsion or violence" used in the Covenants in Nehemiah's or Josiah's time, but in those covenants the people "had understood the words that were declared unto them" and promised nothing "but what they certainly knew to be just, holy, and good."[3]

He feels the Covenant abuses and misapplies the Scriptures,[4] and since it is unlawful the people cannot be accused of having done unjustly and sinned against the Lord for having broken it. For the Independents, whom Canne represented, it became important to show not merely that the presbyterian church was not meant by the Covenant, but that the Covenant itself was illegal and against the word of God. Otherwise, they were open to the serious charge of being covenant-breakers. Canne, therefore, argues that the Covenant is not Scriptural, that it is forced instead of voluntary, that it does not clearly explain its meaning, that it is internally contradictory, and that it encourages dissension and strife rather than promote peace.

The opposition of the Independents to the National Covenant centered upon the religious solution it offered. It was also attacked by Royalists, but for a different reason. A letter written in 1643 by an anonymous writer at Oxford states that he who enters this Covenant professes

---

[1] Canne, op. cit., pp.26,27.
[2] ibid., p.28
[3] ibid., pp.29,30.
[4] ibid., p.41.

> "to allow and approve the Scots Discipline and Government...he doth allow and approve the extirpation of Episcopacie...he doth in conscience account and esteeme those that adhere to the King to be Incendiaries, Malignants, and common Enemies...he approves the maintaining and pursuing of this Covenant against all opposition and lets whatsoever; which is, by force of Arms to compell the King to the Reformation pretended herein."[1]

He denies that any subject "can with good conscience" approve this Covenant when it is advanced "against his Soveraignes Command." Can any subject of the kingdom, he asks, "covenant with other subjects, and bind himselfe to doe or endeavour notorious injustice to others?"[2] By this Covenant he contends the Church is spoiled of possessions and interests assured them by law, and a company of men "whose calling, power, and privileges are as ancient as the Kingdome" are extirpated. Can any subject, asks the writer, "covenant to force their Soveraigne to consent to such an extirpation and spoyling, from which he is bound by Oath?" His answer is that no subject can bind himself to pursue sincerely and constantly the intentions of this Covenant "without casting off all conscience of that which is just and right." His major concern is that the Covenant does not have royal approval; it is against the king's command, and therefore will result in "evill consequences."

The Solemn League and Covenant may have served political purposes in a time of civil war, but despite its alleged agreement with Scriptural practice, it did not solve the increasingly complex question of religion as so many of its supporters hoped. It is chiefly significant as the expression of presbyterian church views which maintained that "all the sincere Protestants who doe now enter into this Nationall Covenant are a Nationall Church by vertue of this Covenant."[1] For primarily this covenant was a church covenant and an effort to bring about reformation by uniting the people with God. To the Presbyterians the Covenant symbolized great promise of good and peace, but for other Puritans it meant the attempt to substitute an autocratic presbyterianism for an autocratic and hierarchical Anglicism. The Independents at first questioned the interpretation of the Covenant, but soon directly attacked it.

---

[1] The Unlavvfulnesse Of the New Covenant. Briefly manifested in a Letter from H.F. at Oxford, To his worthy Friend T.A. at Cambridge. (Oxford, 1643) pp.1-3.

[2] ibid., p.6.

While this Covenant of reformation was considered a covenant of grace, in no sense was the national covenant substituted for the covenant of grace. It merely supplemented in public expression the individual's covenant with God. It is therefore understandable why questions should be raised as to the necessity of this covenant in view of the existence of the covenant with the individual believer, but it is interesting to call attention to the fact, as will be shown later, that the same fundamental question was raised about the church covenant of the congregationalists. Covenant Puritans hold the covenant between God and each believer as basic, but they are also interested in extending the idea to describe also the fellowship of groups of believers with God. The Presbyterian application of a church covenant between God and the nation was bound to become involved not only in ecclesiastical argument but also in political strife and controversy. While it may have failed to register more than a temporary success, the taking of a national covenant offers an interesting example of the formation of the true visible church according to presbyterian doctrine.

---

[1] *The Second Part of the Un-Deceiver.* (London,1643) p.3.

The Particular Church Covenant

That which was referred to more strictly as a "church covenant" is the theory set forth by those who believed in the congregational pattern of the church, whether or not they believed in separation. This was the view adopted by the early separatists, further propounded by the non-separating congregationalists, and advocated by some of the Independents.

These advocates of particular churches oppose the Presbyterians for "professing a national principle, and every minister is a minister to the whole church."[1] Thomas Goodwin acts as spokesmen for the congregationalists when he admits that in the Old Testament the church was indeed national, but that this national church was succeeded in the New Testament by individual congregations.[2] According to this group, a church is formed not by all the people within a given locality coming together, but by a group of believers voluntarily assembling and binding themselves in a covenant with God in a public ceremony to form a church. A church is not merely a company of believers meeting together, but a "stated society," a spiritual "body politic." Those who profess their faith publicly join the church.

Yet this public expression of the covenant was interpreted as a sign of the inward covenant. The members of the church are "such as are called of God" and "do willingly offer and join themselves, first to the Lord and then to the church."[1] They must first "enter into Covenant with the Lord and then to make a covenant with the congregation."[2]

---

[1] Goodwin,T., Works, XI. p.412.

[2] ibid., IX. pp.467,277.

Only those in covenant with God are considered eligible for membership in the church and participation in the church covenant. The church, according to separatists and congregationalists, is composed of God's elect, the company of visible saints on earth, the "truly godly." None except those whom God has received in may be received into the church. Undoubtedly some hypocrites are within the visible church, but this possibility never shook the basic assumption of the advocates of particular churches, namely, that only those who gave evidence of being in God's covenant are eligible to be members of the church society.[3]

Properly the private covenant should proceed the taking of the public covenant, since all those engaging in a covenant to be members of the church are assumed to be in a personal covenant with God. Theoretically it is possible for a man to be in covenant with God and yet not be in external covenant, but this was regarded as a rare occurence and the exception.[4] He who turns to God, according to Sibbes, turns presently to the company of God's people.[5]

The first use of a church covenant is found among those who separated from the established state church. These men's desires for thoroughgoing reformation were so intense that a sense of urgency drove them to cut themselves off from the English church which they held to be corrupt. They were unwilling to wait longer for the Queen or for Parliament to effect a thorough ecclesiastical reformation and determined to reform churches on their own responsibility.

---

[1] Goodwin, op. cit., XI. p.518.
[2] ibid., XI. p.493.
[3] Ball, J., An Answer to Two Treatises of M^r Iohn Can (1642) p.56.
[4] Ball, J., Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p.92.
[5] Sibbes, R., Works, II. p.256.

Robert Browne is generally acknowledged to have organized in Norwich in 1580, with the assistance of Richard Harrison, the first separatist church in England.[1] He brought the people together to profess their faith and to join in a solemn covenant with God and with one another to be the church and people of God. There are other earlier references to the use of a public covenant, but no explicit use of a covenant to form a church. Champlain Burrage indicates that covenants were used to reform and alter church worship and government before they became the basis upon which separate congregations were organized.[2] Covenants are known to have been used, for instance, to separate from sinful and corrupt practices. There is the congregation at Stoke in Suffolk, which about 1558 "seem to have covenanted by 'giving their hands together' and to have concluded 'by promise one to another, that they would not receive (the Mass) at all.'"[1] Also Francis Johnson, in attempting to prove that the Marian exiles were a true church, described them as being "ioyned in couenant, by voluntarie profession to obey the trueth of Christ, and to witnes against the abominations of Antichrist."[2] The idea of covenant was considered a means of furthering reformation, and it is only a step from the use of covenants to separate from "knownmnevils" to its use in binding persons together in a godly church society.[3]

---

[1] Burrage, C., *Early English Dissenters*, I. pp.92-3 concludes from his research that the "Privie Church" organized by Richard Fitz was probably the earliest English separatist congregation. He entitles the second of two extant documents of the group "the Separatist Covenant of Richard Fitz's Congregation," and believes it "took the place of a church covenant and was to be accepted by all the members of the congregation when they joined it." (*ibid.*, II. p.14note) Though the term "covenant" is not used in this document, the paper does set forth the basis of agreement among the members by explicitly listing those things from which they should abstain. Evidently the "Privie Church" hoped that their action might be the beginning of a national church reform movement led by the Queen herself to "bryng home the people of god to the purity and truthe of the apostolycke churche." (*ibid.*, I. p.93) Thus Fitz differed from Browne's views of complete separation of church and state. Presumably this church aimed at temporary withdrawal from the state church until a full reformation would be effected.by the Queen.

[2] The highly useful two volume work by Burrage referred to above, *Early English Dissenters* (1912) and his earlier *The Church Covenant Idea* (1904) have done much to trace church covenants in the Elizabethan period. Burrage, however, was primarily interested in examining the actual covenants taken in English churches and gives practically no attention to the discussion of the idea of church covenants as found in treatises written by various non-conformists and separatists.

Robert Browne defined Christians as "a companie or number of believers which by a willing couenaunt made with their God are under the gouernment of God and Christ, and keepe his Lawes in one holy communion."[4] The Church is "first planted and gathered" by a covenant made on God's behalf as well as man's -- God promising to "be our God and saviour," and men promising to "geue vp our selves to be of the church and people of God."[5] It is composed only of believers, those leading "a godly and Christian life." It is a "company of faithful people" joined together in a covenant, and not "a multitude of prophane people."[1] Those who disagreed with Browne pointed out that the church of England had made a separation from evil when Queen Elizabeth took the throne, and regarded Browne's action as "impious" and "abusing the Scriptures."[2] But for Browne a covenant freely and willingly entered into marked God's people and brought them under God's government. Men are not to be compelled to join a church or to do good duties. For the individual and the group religion is a matter of consent and agreement to "keepe vnder God's gouernement and obey his lawes."

---

[1] Burrage, Early English Dissenters, I. p.73.

[2] Cf. Jacob, A Defence of the Churches and Ministery of Englande (1599)

[3] Other early examples of a public covenant would include the one taken by John Paget's church at Amsterdam in which the members covenanted "to separate from knownen evils, and to serve the Lord in the Gospell of His Son, so far as it is revealed vnto vs."(Paget,J., Arrow Against Separation (1618) pp.19,121) Also in the exile English church at Frankfort the covenant was used as a basis of settling a dispute which arose in the congregation over the use of the second Book of Common Prayer. (cf. Burrage, op. cit., I. p.41) Such covenants are not strictly speaking church covenants but agreements to avoid particular corruptions. This fact leads Burrage to venture the possibility that the covenant was not first employed in churches "because they were used in the Apostolic or post-Apostolic churches, or even because they thought that the use of covenants was enjoined in the Bible." He suggests their original use may have been to settle differences and awaken people to ecclesiastical evils.(ibid.,I.p.75)

[4] Browne,R., A Booke which Sheweth the Life and Manner of all true Christians (1582) #1.

[5] ibid., #35,#36.

The next few years saw the development of numerous other church covenants, such as a London congregation in 1588, Middlebury 1591; London 1592-3, and the Gainsborough-Scrooby-Leyden-Plymouth church, 1602. But it was not until around 1635-40 that Burrage believes the term "church covenant" itself came to be used.[3] Meanwhile separatists organized churches by persons covenanting together with God.

Henry Barrow also advocated the use of the covenant in forming a church, and professed "reformation by doctrine," in place of reformation by the magistrate.[4] He claimed "we are buylt vpon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Iesus Christ being the chief cornerstone,"[5] and was convinced that "we have not rent our selues from the Church or body of Christ, but rather separated the Church from them."[6] He believed there is "in Gods worde sufficient rules & directions for all actions of the Church,"[1] and defined a church as

---

[1] See quotation in Alison, R., A Plaine Confvtation of a Treatise of Brownisme. (1590) p.122.

[2] Cf. Alison, op. cit., "To the Reader" and p.126.

[3] Burrage, C., Church Covenant Idea, p.57.

[4] Barrow, H., A Plaine Refvtation of M. Giffards Booke (1591) p.217.

[5] ibid., p.210.

[6] ibid., preface.

> "having alwaies consisted of a select peculiar people, called & separated from the prophane of the world; None entring into Christs Church but by a voluntarie profession of their true faith & obedience. Or standing longer there, then they keepe the same faith & obedience."[2]

This voluntary profession of faith, involving the promise to walk in God's way, was the essential character of the covenant for Barrow, as indeed it was for Browne, with the covenant thereby being a means to heighten purity of Christian living.

One of Barrow's main accusations against the English church was that it could not be a true church since it had "neuer entred or smitten couenant with Christ."[3] He condemns the church of England not so much for imperfections and corruptions which may or may not be fundamental, but because it was "neuer rightly gathered to Christ, for that all the prophane and wicked are receiued and retained as members of their Church."[4] The church covenant, being the covenant of God, can only belong to and be used by the society which "consisteth of a companie and fellowship of faithful and holie people gathered in the name of Christ Iesus."[5] None are to be admitted as members of the church "before they have made voluntarie publick profession of their owne faith and obedience."[6]

In summary, Barrowish church covenants involved first a renunciation of the "false" churches of England and separation from "the prophane of the world;" second, a vow to join in a new fellowship "soe longe as they did walke in the lawes of god." For both Browne and Barrow the covenant contained these two essentials. For both these men this "outward covenant", the covenant to which each believer swore upon becoming a member of a congregation, was a public expression of the personal covenant of grace. Thus the church covenant was not a new and different covenant but rather a joining together in public covenant of those who by their profession gave indication of already being in covenant with God. The church was really formed by persons in covenant with God covenanting together for the purpose of worshipping God and walking in his ways.

---

[1] Barrow, op. cit., p.207.
[2] ibid., pp.54-55.
[3] Barrow, A Briefe Discoverie of the False Chvrch, p.163.
[4] ibid., p.26; also A Plaine Refvtation, p.185.
[5] Barrow, A True Description Out of the Word of God of the Visible Church (1589) p.1.
[6] Barrow, A Plaine Refutation.. p.185. Further light on the nature of the covenant employed in Barrow's congregation is found in the testimony members of the church gave upon their arrest. Daniell Bucke, for instance, said he vowed "That he wold walke with the rest of that congregacion soe longe as they did walke in the ways of the lord and as farr as might be warraunted by the word of god."(Burrage, Early English Dissenters, II. pp.35,45.)

Francis Johnson closely followed Barrow not only in "a lawfull separation,"[1] but also in covenant thinking. In defending his position regarding the church he affirms,

> "according to the ordinance of Christ, our assemblyes consist of a company of faithful people, called out and separated from the world and all the false wayes of Antichrist, gathered and ioyned together in an holy covenant and fellowship of the Gospell of Christ, by voluntary publick profession of our faith and purpose to live and walk together in the obedience of Christ according to his word, to the praise and glory of his name."[2]

Unlike Browne and Barrow Johnson presented texts from the Scriptures to substantiate his position.[3] Although none of his quotations specifically mentions a church as a company joined together by covenant, it appears not to have daunted Johnson. Nor did those taking exception to Johnson's views challenge him at this point of the Scriptural foundation of his church covenant.

---

[1] Johnson, F., Certayne Reasons and Arguments.. (1608) p.103.

[2] Johnson, F., A Treatise of the Ministry of the Church of England, (1595) p.73; see also An Apologie or Defence of Such True Christians as are commonly called Brownists (1604) p.36; and An Answer to Maister H. Iacob.. (1600) p.196 for similar statements.

[3] "Esa. 60:4. Phil. 1:5; Acts 2:41, and 17:4. Nehm. 8:39 and Col. 1:2."

Johnson, as did Barrow, criticized the English church for receiving the whole land as members,[1] but he appears to have been prepared to admit that the church of England is in some sense under God's covenant, for he believes that some within that church will be saved.[2] Though he calls them false and "not joyned together in cōmunion of the Gospell by voluntarie profession of the faith of Christ & submission to the gouernement which he hath prescribed to his Church,"[3] yet he concludes that the sacraments offered in the English churches are still capable of conferring God's grace and so are "the signs & seals of his covenant."

This was a point of dissension between Johnson and Henry Ainsworth, who denied that baptism "in apostate churches" could be a seal of God's covenant. He, therefore, firmly maintained that the church of England "is not as yet come vnder this covenant."[4] To receive into membership "all sorts of prophane and wicked men," as the English churches do, is flatly contrary "to the first covenant of our redemption."[5] Separation from those churches thus is needful, says Ainsworth, "if we wil keep the covenant of our God."[6] But Ainsworth would also make clear "that they ar nothing but your *corruptions* that we hav separated from,"[7] and contends that he is only treating the daughter as the church of England treated the mother church of Rome by separating out of it because

---

1.Johnson, *An Apologie*.. p.8.
2.Johnson, *A Christian Plea* (1617) p.121.
3.Johnson, *Certain Reasons and Arguments*, p.69.
4.Ainsworth, H., *Covnterpoyson* (1608) p.132.
5.*ibid.*, p.3
6.*ibid.*, p.107; also p.150.
7.*ibid.*, p.2; also p.7.

of its abominations.

Ainsworth believed a church was truly constituted

> "by the word preached, calling men to a willing holy covenant with God, separating them from the wayes of Satan and Antichrist...vniting them together in the communion of the true faith, and bond of love and peace."[1]

These points, he claimed, are clearly set down in Scripture, though he himself offered no evidence to confirm this. Yet here, as in previous church covenants, the taking of the covenant involves both the separation from evils and the profession of true faith and obedience.[2] Granting that there are reprobates present in the church since some are only called outwardly and others "inwardly, effectually and for ever", yet "all vnto whom the covenant and promise of God doth apperteyn"are to be admitted into the church.[3]

Another influential figure in the ranks of the separatists was John Smyth, who gathered a separatist congregation in Lincolnshire by having the people present join in a solemn covenant with God and each other.

> "They shooke of this yoake of antichristian bondage, and as y^e^ Lords free people, joyned them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in y^e^ fellowship of y^e^ gospel, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."[4]

Whately in his biography of Smyth thinks that Smyth wrote this covenant without knowledge of church covenants which had been engaged in by others, and yet it has marked similarity to Barrowist covenants. Important in Smyth's covenant is the idea that the covenant does not limit the congregation to a prescribed form, but leaves the way open for new promptings of the Spirit and for further revelation God may wish to give his people. Christians, according to Smyth, do not bind themselves to walk in the footsteps of any men "further than they walk in the truth." There is a progressive element in this covenant, which is more marked than in earlier church covenants. It does not ask people to covenant to the truth as it is now known, but to what should become known in due time.

---

[1] Ainsworth, op. cit., p.80; also Orthodox Foundation of Religion, p.58.
[2] Cf. The Communion of Saints (1615) by H. Ainsworth, p.344.
[3] Ainsworth, Covnterpoyson, p.122.
[4] Whately, W.T., "Life of Smyth," in Works of John Smyth, I. p.lxii.

Smyth's success in gathering a church by a covenant occasioned an unusual and controversial incident. Richard Bernard, who had a parish in nearby Worksop, began securing the adherence of people in surrounding parishes to a church covenant he formulated in which the persons covenanting agreed "not to heare the dumb ministers, to watch over one another, to admonish one another, &c. And thervppon to receave the Lord's Supper."[1] Purification rather than separation must have been aimed at, and when he was brought before the authorities, Bernard signed the proffered articles of conformity and retracted his covenant.

Aroused by Bernard's negation of his covenant, Ainsworth, Smyth and John Robinson all took occasion to castigate him.[2] Ainsworth referred to Bernard's "pretended covenant", while Smyth accused him of "inconstancy and apostasy," charged him with "anti-christianisme" and accused him of being so "betwiched" with the "flatterie and elloquence" of the Prelate of York "that your covenant is profane & cast in the dust, men of your covenant must shift for themselves, you have deceived them like the staffe of reed."

---

[1] Cf. Smyth, John, Works, II. p.235.

[2] Robinson, Justification of Separation (1610) in Works, II. p.101. Ainsworth, Covnterpoyson, pp.155-156. Smyth, Works, II. p.332. and p.335.

The discussion between Bernard and the separatists was not over the validity of the church covenant but rather whether the English church was a true church and whether separation from it was justified. Proceeding on the assumption that covenanting with God is assumed where there is outward profession of faith and baptism, Bernard argues that the English churches are properly constituted. In thus seeking to prove that the church of England is within God's covenant, Bernard indirectly affirms the validity of a covenant as the index of true church membership.

In attacking Bernard Smyth took occasion to further expand his own view of the church.

> "I hold & maintayne out of the word that a company of faithful people Separated from al vncleanmnes & joyned together by a covenant of the L. are a true Church; yea though they be but two or three."[1]

Like other separatists Smyth refused to admit his church covenant constituted schism. Alledgedly he was separating from the English church "for the falsehood of them" and because to remain in them meant to limit the covenant. As he tells Bernard you are "at the wil of the Prelates" and so "you dare not covenant and practise al that you know."[2] To covenant with God meant to be free and therefore, Smyth disassociated himself from all sinful communion and practises.

Smyth later rejected the idea of church covenants when he turned baptist. Now the church consists not of people covenanting but of people baptised. The baptist view did not permit the acceptance of a church covenant. Smyth disbanded his church and then readmitted persons by baptism.

---

[1] Smyth, Works, II. p.386.
[2] ibid., II. p.515.

In addition to these separatists the idea of church covenant was accepted by the non-separating congregationalists. These men, like the Brownists and Barrowists, believed in particular churches, but disavowed separation from the English church. They presented a logical formulation of the idea of church covenant, placed it within a framework of covenant thinking and gave an organized defence of the theory.

A good summary of the church views of these congregationalists is set forth in the writings of Henry Jacob, an early leader of the group. He lists five essential principles of church polity. First, the conviction that the New Testament contains and sets forth "an ordinary forme of Church-government" and that this forme "ought necessarily to be kept stil by vs; it is not changeable by men and therefore it only is lawfull."[1]

Secondly, this New Testament form of visible church is "a particular ordinarie congregation" which has "power in it selfe immediately under Christ, to elect and ordaine, deprive and depose their Ministers, and to execute all other Ecclesiastical Censures."[2] Each congregation "is an intire and independent Body politike Spirituall," capable of governing itself.[3]

This particular congregation, in the third place, is "governed with the peoples free consent."[4] It is this aspect of the people's consent in their own spiritual or church government which, according to Jacob, marks the difference "between the Ecclesiasticall

---

[1] Jacob, H., Reasons Taken Out of Gods Word (1604) (no pagination)
[2] Jacob, H., A Christian and Modest Offer of a Most Indifferent Conference (1606) p.2; also Declaration & Plainer Opening..pp.13-14.
[3] Jacob, An Attestation of Many Learned Godly & Famous Divines, p.86.
[4] Jacob, Declaration & Plainer Opening, p.7.

Reformation which we seeke and the Church-government which the L. Bishops in England exercise."[1]

Fourthly, a strong affirmation as to the necessity of reforming the church of England without separating from it. Since English church assemblies

> "have in them godly and holy Christians consociated togeather to serve God (so far as they see) agreeable to his word, so they are in right from Christ essentially true Churches of God, and are so to be acknowledged by vs, and in publick not to be absolutely separated from."[2]

But, as Jacob goes on to say, they are true churches only "accidently," since diocesan and provincial churches "being not in the N. Testament have in them by accident the true essential forme of Christs Visible Churches."[3] Conformity to these assemblies is impossible because the true church order made known in the New Testament is not followed; the Church of England clearly errs, though spiritual communion with it is still to be had.[4]

The fifth common principle is that a particular church is formed by the members covenanting together. None is admitted except by confession of faith and promise of obedience. Jacob believed that each particular congregation "being a spiritual perfect Corporation of Believers" was constituted

> "by a free mutual consent of Believers joyning & covenanting to live as Members of a holy Society togeather in all religious & vertuous duties as Christ & his Apostles did institute & practise in the Gospell."[5]

William Ames elaborated upon this idea of a church covenant in more detail:

---

[1] Jacob, An Attestation, p.17
[2] ibid., pp.305-6
[3] ibid.
[4] Jacob, A Defense of the Churches & Ministry of England (1599) pp79-80.
[5] quoted in Burrage, Early English Dissenters, II. p.157 from Jacob, Principles and Foundations of Christian Religion (1604)

> "The Church as it lives upon Earth...is a Society of believers joyned together by a speciall band among themselves, for the constant exercise of the communion of Saints among themselves.
>
> "Believers doe not make a particular Church, althrough peradventure many may meete and live together in the same place, unless they be joyned together by a speciall bond among themselves; for so some one Church should often be dissolved into many, and many also should be founded into one.
>
> "This bond is a covenant, either express or implicite, wherby believers doe particularly bind themselves to performe all those duties, both toward God and one toward another, which pertaine to the respect and edification of the church."[1]

Precedent for such covenanting, according to Ames, is to be found in the Old Testament practise of the people joining together in covenants whenever a solemn reformation of the church is spoken of.[2] Ames does not actually cite texts, but presumably he had in mind instances such as Josiah's covenant. Nor on the other hand, does Ames mention New Testament authority for the church covenant, although he confidently affirms that he finds warrant for the covenant in scripture.[3]

But Ames does suggest several distinguishing characteristics of the church covenant.[4] First, the covenant is necessary as a way of distinguishing one congregation from another; the covenant designates and defines the particular church.[5] Secondly, since covenants are used to form other societies besides the church,[6] the covenant to establish a church must be specifically for the purpose of "holy communion with

---

[1] Ames, W., Marrow of Sacred Divinity, pp.139-141; cf. also Cases of Conscience, p.63.

[2] Ames, Marrow, p.142.

[3] Ames, A Second Manvdvction for Mr Robinson (1615) p.32.

[4] Ames, Marrow, p.142.

[5] Cf. Goodwin, Works, XI. pp.485,488,296.

[6] See discussion in next chapter on the family and the commonwealth.

God among themselves."[1] It is a covenant dealing with the religious duties of believers to God. Thirdly, the covenant may be explicit or implicit. The fact that it may be implicit would tend to underline the view that the covenant is essential to a church. Fourthly, the use of the covenant is justified by Old Testament practise.

Ames carefully guards against the idea that the visible church should be considered "as a simple effect, arising of mere matter and forme."[2] It is not simply the act or relation of the covenanting which makes a church, but rather "Christian men being the called of God, have in them both matter & forme essentiall for making of a visible church," and they "combining themselves into one body" become the visible church.[3] It is not the compact itself which marks the true church -- for only those in fellowship with the Father are of the church -- and yet "the essential forme of a visible church is a covenant of God, or true fayth made visible by profession."[4]

Besides Jacob and Ames some of the adherents of this non-separating congregational view were Robert Parker, Hugh Peters, John Davenport, John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, Peter Bulkeley, Richard Mather, all of whom ministered in Holland or New England during part of their lives. Men like Thomas Goodwin and Henry Burton, who were among the outstanding Independents in England, also adopted the church covenant in particular congregations.

All of these men were closely bound by their ties of personal friendship and they were essentially of one mind in matters of doctrine and church discipline. Therefore, the elaboration of the church covenant by these men was not essentially different. All followed the same pattern. The only example of a church covenant which seems strangely different is the detailed and complicated version propounded by Hugh Peters before he felt free to accept the pastorate of the English church in Rotterdam.[1] Peters' covenant was so elaborate and binding that it evoked various expressions of concern.

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.141. "The end of this uniting together in covenant is to worship the Lord and to edify one another in all his holy ordinances." (Goodwin, Works, XI. p.493.)

[2] Ames, A Second Manvdvction.. p.32.

[3] ibid., p.33.

[4] ibid.; cf. Goodwin, Works, XI. p.485.

John Paget of the Amsterdam English Church, and a member of the Dutch classis, might be expected to protest; he declared Peters' covenant led to "a kind of Excommunication...and hath caused the difficulty of administering the sacrament because he will give it to none but them whose names are at his New Covenant."[2] This problem was also confirmed by Alexander Browne, presumably a member of Peters' church, who in writing to Sir William Boswell November 1, 1633 from Rotterdam says,

> "I haue heir sent you M^{r} Peters Couenant w^{ch} he maide and vnless wee will all subscribe to this his Couenant wee shall not be admitted to the lords Table neither ould members nor newe: so that it seems to me our Church formerly was noe Church: but what authoritie he haith to doe these things: I know not: for he him self saith the Church of Eingland doth Tije the Conscience of men to do this and that, and he for his parte in this his Couenant Tieth both Conscience; and purse."[3]

In a congregation where covenanting seems to have been hitherto unknown, Peters introduced the idea with the evident intention of purifying the church so that it would conform to the pattern of a reformed church congregation. Only those who covenanted were permitted to partake of the sacraments and to have a voice in the choosing of the pastor. The detailed form of Peters' covenant makes for its uniqueness, and is the basis of Burrage's conclusion that Peters could not have borrowed the idea entirely from the Brownists.[1] It is no simple statement to join believers together by a vow to follow God's way, but a list of fifteen duties which the congregation promises to perform:

---

[1] Peters, Last Report of the English Wars (1646) p.14.
[2] Burrage, Early English Dissenters, II. pp.271-2.
[3] Stearns, R.P., Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands (1940) p.55.

> "1. To be contented with meet tryall for our fitnes to be members.
> 2. To cleaue in hart to the truth and pure worship of God and to oppose all ways of Innouation and Corruption.
> 3. To Suffer the word to be the guider of all Controversies.
> 4. To Labor for growth of knowledge and to that end to Confer, pray, heare and meditate.
> 5. To Submitte to brotherly admonition and Censure with out enui or anger.
> 6. To Be thoroughly reconciled one to another euen in Iudgment be fore wee begin this work.
> 7. To Walk in all kind of exactness both in regard of our selues, and others.
> 8. To For bear Clogging our selues and harte with earthly Cares which is the bayn of religion.
> 9. To Labor to gett a Great meassuer of humilitie and meekness and to banish pride and highnes of spirit.
> 10. To Meditate the furthering of the gospell at home and Abroad as well as in our perssons as with our pursses.
> 11. To Take nearly to hart our brethrens Condition and to Conforme our selues to these troble some tymes both in dyet and apparrell that they be with out excess in necessitie.
> 12. To Deall with all kynd of wisdone and generellnes towards those that are with out.
> 13. To Studie Amitie and brotherly loue.
> 14. To Put one and other in mynd of this Couenant and as occasion is offered to take an Accompte of what is done in the premisses.
> 15. And for the furthering of the Kingdome of Christ: diligently to instruckt Children & seruants: yea and to look to our wayes and accomptes dayley.
> Finis."[2]

This covenant offers an explicit listing of those beliefs and attributes which should characterize the persons who form the spiritual society. It specifies the qualifications and duties of any Christian who would be a part of this particular visible church. No other extant covenant attempted such detailed directions for daily living, and why Peters should have felt the need of such a precise covenant is not at all clear.

---

[1] Burrage, Early English Dissenters, I. p.301.

[2] Boswell Papers, British Museum Manuscript, quoted in Hanbury, B., Historical Memorials Relating to the Independents or Congregationalists. II. pp.309-310.

The activities of these non-separating congregationalists were concentrated outside of England to such an extent that it is surprising to learn that only John Cotton and Henry Jacob of this early group seem to have employed the church covenant in England. Cotton describes his experience in Boston (England) about 1632 in which he "entred into a Covenant with the Lord" along with some scores of godly persons" with the intent "to follow after the Lord in the purity of his worship which though it was defective, yet it was more than the Old Non-conformity."[1] This last phrase of Cotton's statement presumably is a commentary on the sterility of the nonconformity practised by many so-called Puritans of the day. The little known about Cotton's covenant makes it difficult to ascertain whether it is more than simply a covenant to promote true worship. There is no indication that it signified separation from the established church; more likely it was an attempt at reformation from within the church.

It remained for Jacob to form the first congregation in England upon the principles of this group. He returned to England from Holland in 1616 for the express purpose of establishing a church in accordance with his avowed principles, and after conferring with John Dod, Walter Travers and others, concluded "that it ware a very warrantable & commendable way to set upon that Course here as well as in Holland, whatsoever Troubles should ensue."[1] And so

---

[1] Cotton, J., Way of Congregational Churches Cleared, p.20.

> "haveing appointed a Day to Seek y^{e} Face of y^{e} Lord in fasting & Prayer, wherein that particular of their Union togeather as a Church was mainly cōmended to y^{e} Lord; in y^{e} ending of y^{e} Day they were United. Thus those who minded this present Union & so joyning togeather joyned both hands each wth other Brother and stood in a Ringwise: their intent being declared, H. Iacob and each of the Rest made some confession or Profession of their Faith & Repentance, some ware longer some ware briefer. Then they Covenanted togeather to walk in all Gods Ways as he had revealed or should make known to them."[2]

In essence the form of this covenant is very close to that which Browne and Barrow advocated. In the covenanting there seems to have been no real difference between the separatists and the congregationalists except that the former did covenant to separate from the churches around them. In the eyes of the authorities the formation of Jacob's church was bound to be interpreted as another example of separatism. Actually this was not the case; it was a non-separatist but congregational church founded upon a covenant.[3]

But it was in New England that the congregational form of church based upon a covenant flourished not only undisturbed but with official approval. The leaders of the churches there were, as has already been said, men who in England and Holland had indicated their firm belief in the church covenant. But just as the Independents in England challenged and criticized the Presbyterians for their ecclesiastical views and espousal of a national church covenant, so men of presbyterian persuasion challenged the men in New England, and to some extent in England too, for setting forth the necessity of a covenant as the form of particular churches.

---

[1] Burrage, Early English Dissenters, II. p.293 (quoted from Gould Mss.)
[2] ibid., II. p.294.
[3] Additional evidence to this effect is that during John Lathrop's ministry (he succeeded Jacob eight years after the church's founding) the congregation was approached by John Canne, an avowed separatist, to separate themselves from the churches of England and to renounce the English church as a false church. This request to "Detest & Protest against y^{e} Parish Churches" was argued by the congregation with the result that "some were Unwilling in their Covenanting either to be tyed either to protest against y^{e} truth of them, or to affirm it of them, not knowing w^{t} in time to come God might further manifest to them thereabout."(Burrage, op. cit., II. p.301). And so "for peace sake" they all agreed to renew their covenant with these words: "To Walke togeather in all y^{e} Ways of God so farr as he hath made known to Us, or shall make known to us, & to forsake all false Ways."(ibid., II. p.302). However, soon thereafter some members did decide to separate and after a period of persecution Lathrop brought a part of the congregation to New England with him.

In 1639 some of the English preachers, led by Richard Bernard, addressed a letter to the New England ministers accusing them of advocating a "new church way," and the New England ministers prepared a reply defending their views. John Ball also directly questioned the procedures reportedly used in New England churches. Out of this exchange the pros and cons of the church covenant idea are presented. Forced to defend their use of the church covenant the New England ministers undertook to define and describe the covenant more fully than had hitherto been deemed necessary.

It must be remembered that the men in New England who defended their church polity were persons who had been educated in England and served their early ministry in that country and only recently gone to the new world. Their ties and associations with England were still strong. They were the associates and spiritual followers of Henry Jacob, William Ames, and others. Exactly who joined in writing the defense of the New England church order is not clear, though the names of Richard Mather, John Cotton, John Davenport, and Hugh Peters are associated with it. Quite possibly the replies were group efforts.

Actually the debate between the English and New World ministers covered a wide range of church practise of which the church covenant was only one part. The controversy was carried on in the most polite and tolerant language, yet there is little doubt of the wide gap in thinking and the difficulty of reaching common agreement. The English group expressed concern lest the covenant of the New England churches bar from the sacraments many of those persons whom the English ministers felt had title to the covenant of grace.[1] Ball, who opened up this question, is himself a firm believer in the covenant of grace, and even affirmed that when the Apostles planted a church they made a covenant between God and the people who were received into the Fellowship.[2] But Ball, and others in England, questioned whether the New England leaders had bound their churches too strictly and had virtually set up a "new church way" by limiting the privileges of church membership only to those who were combined in a special covenant.[3] Ball admitted that the seals of the covenant are only administered to the visible members of the church, that is, to men who are in covenant through profession of the true faith,[4] but he protested that Scriptures do not teach that a man should be "a constant and set member of a particular societie by covenant to make him a true member of the visible Church."[5]

The men in New England differentiated between the covenant of grace "which is common to all believers" and the church covenant "which is peculiar to confederates." It was their contention that the sacraments should not be administered to all, but only to such as were joined to the people of God in a society.[1] Not believers without church relations, but "confederate believers" only could have the sacraments. In their Apology for the Church Covenant, sent to England in 1639, the men across the ocean wrote a lengthy defense of the church covenant in which the following features were duly noted.

---

[1] Ball, John, A Tryall of the New-Church Way in New England and in Old. (1644).

[2] ibid., p.83. (Scripture references given: Acts ii.38;viii.37 & xix.17-9.

[3] ibid., p.24.

[4] ibid., p.39.

[5] ibid., p.47; cf. also pp.5,24.

First, the church covenant is a holy covenant in that it is made with God,[2] as well as a brotherly covenant made to one another. By this covenant the people are bound and knit together under God as God's people.

Secondly, it is a mutual covenant in which God promises to be their God and the people promise to perform the duties of God's people. "It is not a promise onely to man, but to the Lord himselfe, and likewise to one another."[3]

Thirdly, it is a public covenant, openly made in an assembly amidst a gathering of persons.[4] It is therefore an external covenant.

Fourthly, it should only be entered into by professed Christians, saints and believers, for only saints should be members of the church.[5] The corollary of this is that the church covenant did not differ from but was an extension to the covenant of grace.[6] In the same spirit as the covenant between God and the individual believer, here is a covenant between God and a company of believers. By church covenant is meant "onely a renewing of Covenant, or a new professing of their interest in God's Covenant, and walking according to it."[7]

---

[1] Mather,"Apologie of the said Elders in New England for the Church-Covenant" in Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discvssed. (1643) p.67.
[2] ibid., p.7.
[3] ibid., p.4.
[4] ibid., pp.3 & 17.
[5] ibid., pp.8-9.
[6] ibid., pp.3 & 26.
[7] ibid., p.20. ("Answer")

Fifthly, it is an open and progressive covenant, binding to whatever God may reveal. It does not bind a member to a particular platform or rule.[1]

Sixthly, it exacts a promise to perform the Christian duties commanded by God. It does not leave men at liberty, but involves a promise "of doing such Christian duties as the Gospel of Christ requires of all Saints in Church-estate."[2] It does not involve the promise of any new duties, but only renews the promise to do those things demanded of all believers in Christ.

Seventh, the church covenant is that form by which a company of visible Christians are gathered together into a church, and therefore the way an individual believer joins a church.[3] It is the bond by which they are combined and united into one body.[4] Believers are not in a church until they have joined some congregation by a holy covenant.[5] Persons stand in a new relation to God and towards one another in the society of the church and this relationship is depicted by this public covenant.[6] Furthermore, the church covenant distinguishes particular churches one from another as several and distinct societies. "Without this kinde of Covenanting," writes Mather, "we know not how it would be avoyded, but all Churches would be confounded into one."[7]

Eighth, man is not able by himself to keep this covenant, for no man "hath power of himselfe to any thing that good is."[8] Therefore, no man should enter into church covenant in his own strength, but rather "in an humble looking up to Christ Jesus for help and assistance to performe."[1] Here again the analogy to the covenant of grace is clear.

---

[1] (Mather,R.), "An Answer of the Elders of the severall Churches in New-England To two and thirty Questions.." in Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discvssed, p.64.
[2] Ball, Triall of New Church Way, p.78; also Mather, "Apology", p.8.
[3] Mather, "Apology", p.4.
[4] ibid., pp.8-9.
[5] Mather, "An Answer", p.39.
[6] Mather, "Apology" pp.4-5.
[7] Mather, "An Answer," p.24.
[8] Mather, "Apology," p.26.

In essence these eight characteristics are no different from the ideas of Jacob, Ames and earlier advocates of the church covenant. The men in New England are not setting forth new doctrine, but they were definitely echoing earlier covenant thinking. The reply of the ministers in England was that no mention of a church covenant is to be found in the Scriptures, and that no covenant but the "covenant of promise" is mentioned there. They insist that baptism, as circumcision before it, is the seal of the whole covenant, but "that it is the seale of any other covenant but the covenant of grace we cannot digest."[2] From the English point of view the churches in New England had exceeded the bounds of divine communion by demanding a more strict and narrow ordering of the church and additional duties than warranted by Scriptures.

New England could argue the necessity of the church covenant to prevent any member "when whither and wherefore he please without consent of the Church depart away from it,"[3] but for England it was unwarranted to stipulate that no one could "remove habitation" without consent of the congregation. The English preachers were constrained to censure this "strict binding of mens consciences by humane constitutions." Their final conclusion might be summarized in these words from their answer:

---

[1] Mather, "Apology" in Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, p.27.
[2] Ball, Tryall of New Church Way.. p.68.
[3] ibid., p.78.

> "As for the Covenant it selfe which you mutually enter into, if there you exact nothing but what God requires both for tyrall and stipulation, far be it that we should disallow it, but if yee constraine men to meddle with things that belong not to them, and wind them up higher than God would, and straine every thing to the pitch that you seeme, here to doe in this branch, a godly and sober minde may well pause before he make such promise."[1]

This restrained and tempered warning indicates their determined belief that New England had devised an expedient "which never came into the minde of the Lord Jesus." They were ready to admit that "profession of faith and promise according to the covenant of grace" was required of persons joining a church, but denied that "strict inquiry what sound work of grace was wrought in the soul" was demanded.[2] They challenged the church covenant as "an high encroachment upon Christian libertie."[3]

According to these English churchmen to say the church is a particular society of persons combined in covenant is to establish an eleventh commandment and break the second, because it sets up a human constitution to bind men's consciences. They interpreted the covenant as exacting a promise to undertake new duties beyond what God intended. They were certain that the church covenant was a medium not ordained by God, but was invented by men to preserve unity and to bind men beyond warrant. They denied the church covenant had any basis in Scriptures, nor that it was practised in the time of the Apostles, and therefore it should not be employed in a true church constituted according to God's Word. They expressed deep concern over the refusal of the Lord's

---

[1] Ball, op. cit., p.82.
[2] ibid., p.84
[3] ibid., p.82.

Supper to any who did not first enter into the church covenant.[1]

In reply the men in New England undertook to defend the church covenant by texts from Scripture and by showing how a covenant is implied in the role assigned the church as the bride of Christ. Moreover, they recalled that the covenant was the means of restoring and reforming the church of the Old Testament when it became corrupt; it was the means used to dissolve a church and it was God's appointed way to distinguish among churches. These five arguments form the basis of their case for the continued use of church covenants. The fundamental issue, they asserted, "must not be whether we or others have formerly known and practised it, but whether it has ground from God's Word."[2]

To support their first reason, which admittedly was the crucial and determining point upon which all the others rested, texts were cited from the Old Testament which tell of covenants between God and the church and people of Israel.[3] They affirmed that the church covenant was the manner of constituting churches in the apostles' time and so is also validated in the New Testament, although no specific texts to support this are mentioned.[4]

And yet even if no mention of the church covenant is to be found in the New Testament, these men claim that the church covenant cannot be unlawful,

---

[1] This, it will be remembered, was also the criticism reported about Hugh Peters' covenant at the Rotterdam church; see p.250.

[2] Mather, "Apology," in Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discvssed, p.46.

[3] Cf. Deuteronomy xxix.1,10-13; Exodus xix.5-8; Deuteronomy xxvi.16-18 and xxvii.9. Ezekiel xvi.8 and xx.37.

[4] Later on Phil. i.5 and II Cor. ix.13 are quoted as testimony to the apostles' use of the church covenant as seen in their reference to Christians combining themselves into a spiritual fellowship and professing subjection to the gospel of Christ. (cf. Mather, "Apology," pp.31 & 32.)

> "for whatsoever ordinance of the Old Testament is not repealed in the New Testament...the same bindes up in these dayes, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages, though it be not particularly and expressly mentioned in the writings of the New Testament."[1]

Furthermore, they pointed out that if it be objected that the term "church covenant" is not found in the Scriptures, neither are such highly important terms as "sacrament" or "trinity," though the thing meant is found. Since there is a covenant between God and his church, "it is all one whether it is called the Lord's Covenant or the Church Covenant."[2] Therefore, the name cannot be construed a stumbling block. By such tenuous and somewhat devious arguments they built their cornerstone for the Scriptural validity of the church covenant.

Their second argument was based upon Scriptural references to a church becoming a church by being married to Christ.[3] Since "there is no marriage but by way of Covenant," then the church must be formed by a covenant.[4]

The third argument is founded upon references to a church being restored and reformed by renewing their covenant with God.[5] Since "abuses and corruptions are to be reformed by bringing things back to the first Institution," it follows that the church "was instituted and erected at the first by way of Covenant."[6] The fourth argument is similarly based upon the idea that "if dissolving the Covenant be that which doth dissolve the Church, then the making of Covenant is that which constitutes a Church."[1] The fifth argument arises from the assertion that churches would be confounded into one if there were no covenants to distinguish them.

---

[1] Mather, "Apology," p.8.
[2] ibid., p.25.
[3] Cf. Jeremiah ii.2; II Corinthians xi.2; Revelation xix.7.
[4] Mather, "Apology", pp.10-11.
[5] Cf. II Corinthians xv.10 and xxix.10; Nehemiah ix.38 and x.28-29; Jeremiah 1.4-5.
[6] Mather "Apology," p.13. The various covenants mentioned in the Old Testament offered support to the idea that the covenant was a means of reformation, though no passages could be quoted which expressly stated that churches are formed by covenant. Analogy and deduction form the basis of reasoning which the New England Puritans use to argue the validity of a church covenant.

> "If Churches be distinct societies, and may not be confounded, then Churches are compacted and combined by Covenant...for there is nothing els without this that wil sufficiently distinguish them."[2]

There is no evidence that this lengthy interchange of opinions across the ocean had any noticeable effect in changing the views or practises of persons on either side. The New Englanders remained strong exponents of a church covenant, warranted, they claimed, by Scripture, as central to their church polity of particular congregations. They did not, however, claim that a covenant simply makes a company a true church, but "a covenant to walke in such wayes of worship to God and edification of one another, as the Gospel of Christ requireth."[3] In England the church covenant never assumed great importance although it continued to be advocated by some Independents.[4] But in New England the idea of church covenant became a central issue and gave rise to a far reaching religious controversy when by the second and third generation to be in covenant became something inherited rather than voluntarily and individually professed on the basis of personal experience. Yet the concept which grew and matured so quickly in the fertile soil of New England was transplanted from England, often by way of Holland, where it had been generated and nurtured by both separatists and non-separating congregationalists.

---

[1] Mather, "Apology," p.13.

[2] ibid., p.14.

[3] ibid., p.39. This closely follows William Ames' belief that it was the purpose behind the covenant, its aim, rather than the act itself which distinguished the church covenant from other social covenants.

[4] Henry Burton and Thomas Goodwin were among the most vocal supporters of the idea in the period under consideration.

Summary.

Clearly some of the most active covenant preachers have not been mentioned in this discussion of the church covenant. Particularly an explanatory word should be added regarding Greenham, Perkins, Preston and Sibbes. None of these men left more than indirect evidence of his church views. Presumably Greenham and Perkins leaned toward presbyterianism and Cartwright's views regarding church reformation. Greenham, for a time at least, supported Cartwright, and Perkins is known to have participated in activities with Cartwright's group.[1] Neither Perkins nor Greenham seem to have indicated in their writings their clear positive views of church government.[2] Perkins did speak of God covenanting with his church, but the reference appears to be to the covenant of grace which God makes with his elect and the Church is referred to in a universal sense.[1]

---

[1] The Dictionary of National Biography ("William Perkins") reports that Perkins was among a group meeting at St. Johns College in 1589 to revise a treatise "Of Discipline." The same year he petitioned the authorities on behalf of Francis Johnson, who was imprisoned for his advocacy of a presbyterian church government.

[2] John Robinson clearly felt the need to remedy this omission, and wrote "An Appendix to Mr. Perkins his six Principles of Christian Religion" devoted exclusively to describing the church of God evidently for the purpose of filling in where Perkins is silent. Robinson defines the church as "A Companie of faithfull and holy people (with their seed) called by the word of God into publicke covenant with Christ & amongst themselves for mutual fellowship in the use of all the means of Gods glory and their salvation." (p.4) He leaves the impression that the principles affirmed by Perkins are not complete without the addition of this statement on the church. Robinson appears to want to link the idea of a particular church covenant with Perkins as something which Perkins had overlooked. Despite such posthumous "addenda" Perkins' writings give no indication that he thought one way or another about the church covenant. For some reason he never applied the covenant in this connection.

Likewise, two later vigorous exponents of the idea of covenant, Richard Sibbes and John Preston, have very little to say about the church in their writings. Such omission may be partly explained by their primary interest in personal religion and their devoting very little attention to social and political questions.

That little was known as to Sibbes' view of church polity would seem to be borne out by the enthusiasm with which Bartlett in his A Modell of the Primitive Congregational Way includes a quotation from Sibbes, who is "little thought by the most men to have been of this judgment,"[2] that is, in support of particular churches. Evidence, while not conclusive, would indicate that Sibbes was probably drawn to the position of the non-separating congregationalists.[3] That he was held in high esteem by advocates of that position is clear from the many references other Puritans made to his writings and the high praise heaped upon him. It was an Independent, Thomas Goodwin, who took responsibility for preparing and editing some of Sibbes' writings for publication. Most revealing of all is Sibbes' participation, along with Gouge, Davenport and nine others, in a plan to buy feoffees to establish a congregational ministry in England.[4] His active support of this pro-

---

1. Perkins, Works, I. p.321
2. Bartlett, W., A Model of the Primitive Congregational Way(1647) p.91.
3. In "A Breathing After God"(1636) Sibbes defines church members by saying "they come not by chance into our house those that are members of our society: but there is an order. There is a governor in a home, and some that are under government, and there is a voluntary conjunction and combination. So the church is a voluntary company of people that is orderly." (Works, II. p.226) This statement may well imply a covenant and it gives the clearest indication of Sibbes' church views. "Particular visible churches now are God's tabernacle."
4. See references under footnote 1, p.69.

ject would clearly align Sibbes with the congregationalists. It indicates that Sibbes was not oblivious to the ills in the existing church, but it is somewhat surprising that he did not write more regarding his church views and especially that he did not actively advocate the idea of church covenant.

In summary, it is apparent that the idea of covenant was applied to the church by Puritans holding divergent views of church government and order. All of these covenant preachers would probably agree that God covenants with his elect individually and thus with each member of the Church Universal. They would also concur in saying that those who are members of God's visible church on earth are "outwardly" in covenant with God. But for the presbyterians this "outward" covenant took the form of a national covenant and for congregationalists and separatists the form of a particular church covenant.

All three groups believed that church membership involved a public profession of faith, but the presbyterians were content that this expression be made by the rulers and representatives of the people on behalf of the nation as a whole. Among the separatists and congregationalists, on the other hand, there was a strong emphasis upon the profession of faith by each member of the church. All would agree that God had instituted the proper order of the church and that to be a member of the church indicated a separation from known evils and an obedience to God's revealed way. And yet both presbyterians and congregationalists were accused of binding people in the church covenant tighter than was warranted. The church covenant was looked upon as a means to establish order and to effect reformation. For one group it called for the reformation of the whole nation through the establishment of the "true" church way. For the other groups it was a more individual and small scale reformation to purify particular churches and insure as far as possible that congregations are composed of faithful children of God.

Whereas for the Presbyterians the church is composed of persons living in a geographical area, the congregationalists and separatists emphasized the idea of people freely coming together by mutual compact to form a church. For these latter groups the covenant meant voluntariness in church membership. There was nothing traditional or automatic about membership in the Christian fellowship. People join because they are called; because they give their willing consent. To join a visible church involves a deliberate step which each believer makes for himself, just as there is a step which he must take to join God's covenant of salvation. Membership in the church is by profession of faith and readiness to live as God intends. This idea of individual commitment and voluntary membership in the church was missing in the idea of a church national covenant among presbyterians.

In no sense does the church covenant supplant the covenant of grace. Rather it supplements it. Both are spiritual covenants; both are God's covenants, affirming a relationship between the divine and the human. Both presbyterians and congregationalists speak of the idea of church covenant as simply one aspect of, or an extension of, God's covenant with the individual. The idea of church covenant -- whether national or particular churches -- was essentially the social expression of the covenant God makes with each believer. A company of God covenant with God to be his people; the presbyterians affirm that all in the nation covenant to be God's people; the congregationalists and separatists believe that any voluntary group coming together for spiritual purposes can engage by covenant to be God's people. In either case by this covenant engaged in with God and with one another men form the ecclesiastical society.

These church covenants are social covenants applied to one of the ordained societies among men. In the next chapter further application of the covenant to other societies will be discussed.

Chapter VI.

THE COVENANT AND CIVIL SOCIETIES

The preceeding chapter described the idea of covenant as it was applied to the church. But for these Puritans the church is not the only social order. Actually there are three societies ordained by God for men to live in: the family, the church, and the commonwealth.[1] These three, the Oeconomicall, the Ecclesiastical, and the Political, form the framework of men's relations to each other.

All three societies are ordained by God but men binding themselves together by a covenant bring into being the actual expressions of each society. Such a social covenant has already been considered in terms of the church, and is just as pertinent in regard to the family and the commonwealth. A man and woman binding themselves in a covenant of marriage before God form a family. Men coming together to form a civil society also do it by a covenant. There is, however, this difference, that while God has established the precise form which the ecclesiastical and oeconomicall society should take,[2] he has not ordained a necessary form for the commonwealth. There is uniformity in the pattern of family and church structures which men must abide by, but the method of rule in the political order is left to "the devise of men."

The Scriptures are quoted as offering precept and example of the kind of family and church which God would have men form, but as for the political order "it was left to men's liberty."[1] In other words, a claim of jure divino could be applied to the family and the church, but the type of commonwealth is not determined by God but is "from humane designment." Men are left free to establish the particular kind of political society best suited to their needs, and this they do by covenanting together. Social covenants are used, therefore, in the formation of the church, the family, and the commonwealth.

---

[1] Perkins, *Works*, I. p.418, also II. p.324 & III. p.511. See also Ames, *Marrow*, p.309; Scudder, *Christians Daily Walke*, pp.48-49; Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p.1; Culverwell, E., *Treatise of Faith*, p.278; Baynes, P., *A Commentarie Upon the First Chapter of Ephesians* (1643) p.28; Taylor, *Works*, p.141; Ainsworth, *Communion of Saints*, p.385; Downame, G., *An Abstract of the Duties Commanded*, (unpaged); Smyth, J., *Works*, I. p.141; Robinson, J., *Works*, I. p.237; Goodwin, T., *Works*, XI. p.213.

[2] Ames, *Marrow*, p.309.

But in addition, various roles which individuals play within each of these three societies are defined by covenant. As an individual person, man is related to God in a covenant of grace. Also as an individual person he is related to his fellow men by covenants which define those relationships. Every sincere believer stands in a double relation, to God and to his fellow men, and it is not surprising that those Puritans who made relationship by covenant central between God and man should apply the covenant idea to man's relationships to other men. Within all three societies the covenant defines and establishes an order and proper mutual connection among men.

The General View of Society

Before examining in some detail the various covenants in the civil societies, it seems important to review in general how these covenant Puritans conceived of human society. Puritan discussions of religion followed John Calvin's pattern in distinguishing between the spiritual and the civil man.[2] Every man, wrote Perkins, is a "double person" -- "a person of mine owne selfe vnder Christ and his doctrine" and "a person in respect of another."[1] Every man is under two governments, "the kingdom of heaven and the temporall kingdome." The first relates to the inner man and eternal life; the second to external conduct and civil justice. In relation to God a man is a son of God, a member of Christ; in relation to men he is "a part of a bodie," a member of civil society. Man's role in these two kingdoms formed the foci of religion. The Ten Commandments, for example, are usually discussed by dividing them so that the first four interpret man's duty to God while the remainder prescribe man's duty to man.

---

[1] Ames, op. cit., p.309; See also Jacob, H., Reasons Taken Out of God's Word (1604) p.26; Burton, H., Vindiciae, Veritatis (1645) p.5; Parker, H., Case of Shipmony (1640) (unpaged); Goodwin, T., Works, XI. pp.124,256; Hunton, P., A Treatise of Monarchy (1643) p.3; Ames, Cases of Conscience, p.164; Burroughes, J., Gospel Conversation, p.143.

[2] Calvin, John, Institutes, III.xix.15.

Man must always be seen in his relationships. This is central in the Puritan view of society. As has already been pointed out, in theological terms man is never considered alone; he is always said to be either in fellowship with God or with the devil. So from the viewpoint of sociology man in isolation does not exist; he is always thought of in relation to his fellow men.

There is no such person as a mere individual. A man as he is alone and in his private person characterizes nobody. Man by nature is sociable and finds solitude uncomfortable. The "solitary" life, such as practised by hermits, is distinctly viewed as "altogether contrary to the law and will of God," and something to be shunned.[2] God did not create men to live alone, but he requires them to live in relation to others.[3] "Societie is the very Soule and Life of Mans Life."[4]

Society, consequently, is not made up of men as mere individuals, but rather is composed of parents, fathers, mothers, children, masters, servants, rulers, subjects, ministers, buyers, sellers, pupils, teachers, superiors and inferiors, etc. Each of these is a term and description of relationship; in each a man reaches beyond his own person. The proper inter-relationships involved and the correct ordering of these relationships formed the pressing problems of society.

---

[1] Perkins, W., Works, I. p.395.
[2] Ames, Marrow, p.308. Cf. also Perkins, Works, I. p.38 and Ball, A Short Treatise, p.184.
[3] Ainsworth, H., Communion of Saints (1615) p.315.
[4] Gataker, T., Good Wife God's Gift, (1637) p.160.

This interpretation of society is expressed in the religious view of the calling. God as the Creator and active Governor of all things in the world has established an order and a place for all men. Corresponding to the two kingdoms in which every man lives, every man has two callings: an "internal vocation," which relates to God's decrees of election and reprobation, and an "externall vocation," which determines his role in the temporal world.[1]

No man is without a calling in this world. It is God's ordinance that all men "should labor in some honest vocation, for their private maintenance and the common good."[2] Each has a "distinct place" established by God in which he is to live and to undertake specific duties. God never intended men simply to play or to do nothing![3] Each man's particular calling is the one in which God has placed him and in which he can best serve his fellow men and advance God's glory. Unless every person be "settled in this" in his conscience, "no good works can be done in any calling."[4] To fulfill God's purpose for his life and to glorify God each man is exhorted to accept his calling with gladness and fulfill his obligations and responsibilities. Discontent and fault finding with one's estate, says Gataker, stems from an "irreligious spirit."[1] Every person must be content whatever his "portion" is "because God's providence hath so appointed."[2] Not only is man not "to quarrel with God's government,"[3] not to question his calling, but "hee must walke diligently in the duties thereof."[4] There are duties which properly belong to each particular function and role within society. Faithfulness and obedience in one's calling is a sure mark of the true Christian.[5] Religion confirms rather than takes away each man's duties.[6]

---

[1] Cf. Calvin, Institutes, IV.iii.10.
[2] Ball, Treatise of Faith, p.387.
[3] Scudder, H., Christians Daily Walke, p.49.
[4] Perkins, Works, I. p.478.

Society, likened to the human body, is an organism, which must have a head to rule and hands and feet to serve. It was easy for these Puritan writers to find warrant in the Apostle Paul for this conception, if justification was necessary. Just as each part of the human body has a particular function to perform, so the social body is composed of men with various duties and mutual responsibilities, each of which is important to the welfare of the whole. Man best serves God and his fellow men by fulfilling the duties of the calling to which God has assigned him, whether that role be singularly important or relatively insignificant. Men are endued by God with a variety of gifts; all cannot be the hand, nor all the feet. But the major fact to impress upon each man is the importance of his place in terms of the glory of God and "the greater good of mankinde."

> "Each is excellent in his gift and place, even the meanest made worthy of respect from the greatest because of his usefulnesse for the common good; even as the least member of the naturall body is truly usefull and to be

---

1. Gataker, T., Sermons, p.163.
2. Perkins, Works, I. p.160; cf. Preston, Fovre Godly and Learned Treatises (1630) p.30.
3. Sibbes, Works, V. p.179
4. Perkins, op. cit., III. p.512.
5. Gouge, Wm., Of Domesticall Duties, p.10.
6. Dyke, D., Second Part of Works, p.218.

> respected as well though not so much, as the most honourable."[1]

It is to the credit of Calvinism that it was able to imbue in each person a due sense of his importance and to instill in him a desire to perform his divinely assigned duty within the social order.

Within this fixed and rigid system is there no chance of altering one's position? For all practical purposes, no. It is not for man to challenge or change the order which God has established. However, "sometimes there may be a change of one calling into another." Exceptions may be made "for private necessity, as when a man is disabled from his calling," or "for publike good, as when a private man is called to be a Magistrate in a society, and thus Christ changed his calling."[2] The emphasis, however, is never upon changing one's place in society, but rather upon "constancy" in one's appointed calling. Only thus is it possible to find favor with God, who loves all his creatures "euery one in their place,"[3] Only thus is it possible to assure the stability of society.

Yet strictly speaking there is not one general society of mankind but three: the family, the church, and the commonwealth. God has ordained that there be government and order in each society and given power to certain persons to rule others. Rule in these societies is always in the name of God, since the end of these human kingdoms, as well as the kingdom of God, is to further God's glory and purposes.[4]

The order within each society is based upon positions persons occupy as superiors, inferiors, or equals. Relationships of equality, such as brother and sister, friend and friend, are few in comparison to the wide range of superior-inferior relationships. Essentially this is a medieval pattern of society with each person occupying a higher or lower office and mutually dependent upon each other.

---

[1] Scudder, op. cit., pp.95-6.

[2] Taylor, T., Works, p.609. As an aside, it is interesting to note that this principle does not seem to have applied in the case of Puritans who fled to Holland or settled in New England.

[3] Perkins, Works, I. p.109.

[4] Cf. Scudder, op. cit., p.221.

But without superiors and inferiors to form the basis of government it was inconceivable that man could abide in society.[1] Essential to a carefully ordered society is a recognized system of authority to which all adhere. God, one of whose chief attributes is order, is concerned that neither anarchy nor confusion exist.[2] And by ordaining superiors and inferiors God has instituted in each society the government necessary to maintain order. All governors are God's lieutenants exercising their authority in his name. God has expressed his authority in two ways: by the absolute power which he has over all creatures, and by "that finite and limited power which he hath ordained that men should exercise ouer men."[3]

Scriptural authority for the governing of all societies was commonly rooted in the fifth commandment. The admonition to honor father and mother was interpreted as setting forth the authority not only of natural parents, but of all superiors in power.[4] The name of father carries over to all societies. The father ruling in the household is comparable to the magistrate who is the "civil father" in the commonwealth and the minister who is the "spiritual father" in the church.[5] Within each society God has established superiors, who being placed above others, have the right from God to govern their inferiors.

---

[1] Ames, *op. cit.*, p.310.

[2] Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.123; Robinson, *Works*, I. p.117; Sibbes, *Works*, VI. p.112.

[3] Perkins, Works, I. p.522.

[4] Ball, *Short Treatise*, p.191.

[5] Adams, T., *Works*, III. p.157; cf. also Sibbes, *op. cit.*, VII. p.19.

Actually there are two kinds of superiors. Superiors may be "such as have any preeminence above us,"[1] and those who exercise government and dominion over another.[2] A person may be a superior in terms of age or special gifts with which he is endowed, or with respect to his office.[3] Primarily it is superiority in the latter capacity to which most attention is given. Yet whatever the basis of superiority general duties and responsibilities devolve upon all superiors as well as upon all inferiors.

Superiors must show themselves worthy to be honored and reverenced, to carry themselves modestly, meekly, and moderately, to show "gravitie answerable to their dignitie," and "to shine before their inferiors by an ensample of a blamelesse life."[4] Moral superiority is thus clearly enjoined as a responsibility of all superiors. In addition, those who are superiors in respect to power and place ought to procure for their subjects "all means of living well," to "stirre them up to good by all just meanes," and to "free them from danger."[5] For a superior "to transgresse the limits or bounds of his own place" is "a tyranny and vsurpation."[6]

The duties of inferiors to superiors is summed up in reverence of their persons, subjection to their power and authority, and obedience to their commandments.[7] Inferiors must at all times, both inwardly and outwardly honor their superiors, and serve them as occasion offers. They are to obey them "though evill, but not with evill" and to submit themselves to their corrections.[1]

---

[1] Downame, G., An Abstract of the Duties Commanded (unpaged).

[2] Whately, Wm., Bride-bush, p.105.

[3] Ames, op. cit., p.311; also Cases of Conscience, pp.154-5.

[4] Perkins, Works, I. p.516; Downame, G., op. cit.,; Ball, Short Treatise, p.195; Brinsley, John, The True Watch and Rule of Life, (1611) p.66.

[5] Ames, Cases of Conscience, pp.154-5.

[6] Whately, op. cit., p.115.

[7] Ames, op. cit., p.155; Perkins, op. cit., I. pp.50-51.

The key to this picture of society is allegiance. God has so disposed every one in his place that there is no one who is not in some respects under another. Inequality exists everywhere; everyone is obligated to everyone else. In such a thoroughly inter-related society all are joined in mutual duties. No one stands alone; no one is absolute or independent in either his person or his power. Every one belongs to someone in the hierarchical scheme, and the right ordering of society depends upon the agreements and duties each person has in reference to those above him and below him.

Considered another way these Puritans classified all human relationships as natural, violent, or voluntary. The relation between parents and children, or between brother and sister is obviously natural; violent relationships exist between a conqueror and his captives. But beyond these all remaining social relationships are looked upon as voluntary, as having a measure of mutual consent. Accordingly all voluntary relations can be based upon a covenant.

In effect the covenant is the fabric binding society together. Whenever a man voluntarily takes on a new social relationship, covenant is implied. No covenant exists in natural or violent relationships since there the act of will is absent. But covenant is present where there is freedom of consent. Whether implicit or explicit this social covenant defines the nature of man's relations to his fellow men and the duties to which both parties are obligated. The covenant orders government by setting forth the responsibilities of governor as well as the governed in all realms of life.

---

[1] Perkins, *Works*, I. p.512; Downame, *op. cit*.

The ordering of each society is based on a covenant or agreement between the ruler and the ruled. For governors of the household there is an agreement of the members of the family; for church governors there is an agreement of the church; for civil magistrates there is an agreement of the people of the commonwealth.[1]

Among the proponents of these social covenants there is no contradiction between the idea of covenant and the fundamental principle of God establishing social orders and relegating authority to governors. Actually these covenants within society are not merely human; they are also divine, since God has a part in them too.[2] God as well as man has an interest in the right relationships within society. In this sense they are "double covenants," binding a man not only to his brethren but to God.[3] Every man stands in this two-fold relationship. And this is not only true of society in general but of all three particular societies.

In no sense is this two-way relationship to be interpreted to mean that God has nothing to do with human relations and with human societies. God not only has an active part in originating these societies but he still works in and through them. Each of these societies is from God and serves his ends; they exist to further God's glory.

God relates himself to men in each of these three social orders. Through Christ he binds himself to his people as a Father, a

---

[1] Browne, R., A Booke which Sheweth... (no pagination). By and large it was the non-separating congregationalists who presented the most explicit application of the covenant to social orders, although in the 16th century Greenham, Cartwright, Browne, and Perkins are quite suggestive.

[2] Cf. Goodwin, T., Works, XI. p.457.

[3] Dyke, Tvvo Treatises (1617) p.62.

Priest, and a King in the family, the church, and the state respectively. In fact, God enters into a three fold covenant with men in these three societies, for in the establishment of each there is a covenant between God and men. To form the oeconomical order God enters into a covenant with a man and woman to institute a family; he engages in a covenant with the people gathered together to form a church; he undertakes a covenant with the people establishing a political society. The origins and the governing of all three societies are expressed in terms of covenant, and each is, in a sense, God's covenant. Since God has not only ordained these societies but ordained that each society shall have a government, man by covenant not only joins in bringing particular expressions of these societies into being but also in setting up the government within each.

But if God has established societies with superiors and inferiors as governors among men, why is a covenant necessary? How, if men are assigned by God to a particular calling, can that calling be engaged in by covenant? Such questions are never directly faced and answered. What is generally implied is that God has established the order of superiors and inferiors but that men have a voice in calling this or that particular person into a position of authority and in obeying him. Men have a part in the relationships into which they enter. While the Word of God commands people to obey their rulers, yet the relationship of people and rulers is not entered into, nor its government binding except by covenant. For example, it is only when a woman makes herself a wife by her voluntary consent to a particular man, or when a people enter into a covenant with their king, that the Word of God takes hold of the parties covenanting and binds each to do the duties pertaining to his function.[1] The underlying assumption is man's freedom to enter into relationships. Man is not obligated without his consent. Society is not completely arbitrary and static; it is characterized by covenant. In practice much of this freedom is only inferred, since of necessity man must enter social relations and must live under government. Yet the introduction of voluntariness through the idea of a covenant is highly significant as marking a break from the rigid pattern of social status and as indirectly questioning a rigorous interpretation of God's calling. Actually covenant which gives man a voice in determining his social responsibilities and duties tends to inject some modification in the idea of a calling.

The far reaching implications of the application of the covenant to human relations is further seen by noting that a formula of agreement generally held applicable to relationships of equality is used to interpret relationships between superiors and inferiors. Thus the new forces come into conflict with the old. John Preston accepts the more traditional social framework when he says the relationships of inferiors and superiors are marked respectively by "subjection" and by "yeelding" whereas only equals engage in a compact.[2] But, as a matter of fact, inferiors and superiors were in covenant, and for the covenant to be thus applied to general relationships was bound to weaken the inequalities in society.

Such might be the eventual consequences of this covenant theory, yet there is no indication that the advocates of covenant had this in mind. Their primary interest seems rather to have been the assertion of the voluntariness of social relations. They did not look beyond into the possible consequences of this new freedom. For them the existence of necessity in social relations made for a less desirable situation than where persons were bound freely and willingly.[1] Subjection and inferiority are not protested against as such; it is compulsion which they were challenging and were interested in eliminating. They aimed at a voluntary society while still recognizing differences of superiors and inferiors. Such is the significant role which the idea of covenant played; it introduced a freedom of consent into social relationships which otherwise characterized a highly deterministic social order. And by so doing it increased the sense of responsibility for and participation in society. The concern expressed in theology, that God is not a hard task master to his servants, but the merciful Father to his sons, is carried over into society. Life is not one of bondage, but one of mercy and recognition of a reasonableness and freedom of man in his relations to other men.[2]

---

[1] Mather, R., "An Apology," in Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discvssed. p.24.

[2] Preston, J., Golden Scepter, I.82.

There is no clear evidence that these men were guided primarily by Scriptural revelation and example in determining relationships and responsibilities among men. In general, they considered their views adequately supported by Scriptures. But they made no attempt to start from the Old and New Testaments and proceed deductively to a philosophy of society. Instead existing social relationships marked their starting point. Into the existing framework of society they introduced the idea of covenant, and then proceeded to justify application of the idea by references to God's Word.

1.Preston, *op. cit.*, II.107-8.
2.Preston, *Life Eternall*, p.88; also *Nevv Covenant*, pp.318,425,462,483.

The Oeconomicall Society

No society is more needful, more comfortable, more constant, more kindly, or more delightful than the society of man and wife, "the maine Roote, Source, and Originall of all other Societies," writes Thomas Gataker.[1] In Puritan thinking a place of pre-eminence is given the family as the first society and "the fountaine and seminary of all society." Every church and commonwealth actually is dependent upon the family, which being the economic unit is sometimes spoken of as "the oeconomicall society."[2]

> "Take it away, and the world must needs either come to an end within one age, or else be replenished with bastards...Debarre marriage and you bring the being of the World to a full stop, yea to a finall conclusion... Wee must have no World, or but a beastly and confused world, if marriage were not."[3]

God has prescribed the precise order of the family, which Ames reports, has remained "one and the same through all ages and nations."[4] God made one man and one woman and joined them together. Monogamy alone conforms to God's edict that two be made one flesh. Polygamy is ruled out as a sin against the first institution of marriage, and "a sinne against the law of nature and right reason."[5]

All couples are united in marriage by a covenant, "a contract of giuing and receiving."[6] There is no marriage but by way of a covenant requiring "joint consent and absolute promise" voluntarily given. "It is not in the authority of any humane power to joyne any in marriage without both their consents."[7] The relationship of a man and a woman being "moderated with a certaine equality,"[1] mutual consent has special significance and importance. In addition, it is generally asserted that the consent of the parents is required, for the father is "the efficient cause of marriage of his children."[2]

---

[1] Gataker, T., A Good Wife Gods Gift, p.161.

[2] Whately, W., The Bride-bvsh, p.17.

[3] Whately, W., A Care-Cloth, p.23.

[4] Ames, Marrow of Sacred Divinity, p.309.

[5] Ames, Cases of Conscience, V.35.6,7. p.198.

[6] Whately, W., A Care-cloth, p.33.

[7] Ames, op. cit., V.35.21. p.200.

But in an important sense matrimony is much more than a contract between a man and a woman. It is not "onely a Civill, but a Divine conjunction whose Institutour and Ordainer is God himselfe."[3] It is God's covenant, and therefore "an holy Covenant and Institution." God is the author of it; it is his ordinance; he is a witness; he maintains and blesses marriage.[4] In marriage God "hath a maine and principall stroke," for he is "the chiefest agent in ioyning man and woman in marriage."[5]

This emphasis on marriage as more than a mere human contract was steadily maintained by these covenant preachers. Marriage not only signifies that a man and woman bind themselves by covenant to one another, but that they also are bound to God.[6] It is called "Gods covenant," "a knot of God between you,"[7] because God is a party to the marriage covenant; it is made in his presence and to him.[8]

The chief Scriptural passage quoted to prove marriage God's covenant was Proverbs 2:17, which refers to "the strange woman..that forsaketh the friend of her youth and forgetteth the couenant of her God."[9] It was also pointed out that God has instituted marriage as his ordinance in the story of Adam and Eve, and that the parties entering marriage do come "in the sight of God, and before men and angels to make a couenant," and seek God's blessing on the agreement.[1]

---

[1] Ames, Marrow, p.313.
[2] Ames, Cases of Conscience, p.202; Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties.
[3] Ames, op. cit., p.208.
[4] Taylor, Works, p.155; Gataker, Sermons, p.122; Whately, op.cit., p.33.
[5] Gouge, op. cit., p.119.
[6] Dod, John, Ten Commandments, p.287.
[7] Gataker, A Good Wife Gods Gift, p.155.
[8] Perkins, Works, II. p.330.
[9] Cf. Perkins, Works, I. p.59; II. p.330; Gouge, op. cit., p.119

From a very practical point of view these Puritans were concerned that marriage be regarded as more than a "civill contract." If it were no more than that, then, as Perkins declares, "as it is made by the consent of men and women, so it might bee dissolved by like consent."[2] Therefore, it is necessary to make clear that in the making of a marriage "beside the consent of the parties, the authority of God is interposed." It is God who has joined the man and woman together to found a new society. If the marriage covenant is broken, not only are the vows that the man and woman make to each other retracted, but the solemn vow made to God is violated.

Therefore, a man who finds himself married to a faithless uncompanionable partner is not released from this bond of marriage.

> "Why should I, will some say, be an Husband to her if shee be not a Wife to me? I answer, No, Thou owest it to God, And it is not default of dutie on her part, that can discharge thee of thy debt to him. So must thou doe the dutie of an Husband as well to a bad as to a good Wife, for conscience of Gods command. Doe thou thy dutie for God, and thou shalt have thy reward from God."[3]

As Wing stated it, "the Husbands good must eate out the Wives evill;" "the worse the Wife is, the better must he endeavour to be."[4] Neither "moral defaults" or "natural defects" are an excuse to break this covenant or to release a party from the agreement. Instead it is important to realize that there is no man or woman without infirmities and husband and wife are by patience and love to seek to cover the infirmities of the other.[1]

---

[1] Dod, op. cit., p.287.
[2] Perkins, Works, II. p.397.
[3] Gataker, A Good Wife God's Gift, p.155.
[4] Wing, John, The Crowne Conivgall (1620) p.49.

Marriage is an everlasting covenant, binding husband and wife for life in the establishment of a permanent society.[2] Neither party should seek to be loosed from this relationship, but are cautioned to abide in the calling in which God has placed him. "For if cohabitation be of God, then the contrary of it, separation, is of Satan."[3]

And yet marriage may be dissolved "upon such cause as God approveth to be just," for indissolubility, says Ames, "was not instituted for the punishment but the comfort of the innocent."[4] Such is man's sin that sometimes the marriage covenant is broken. Adultery, which is regarded "a great sin" and "a very high breech" can break this covenant.[5] Adulterers not only deal unjustly with their marriage partner, but "they abuse God." They forfeit their bond to God, even to the hazard of their salvation. The committers of this sin provoke God's curse, and cast themselves off from human society.[6]

1.Gataker, Marriage Duties, p.204.
2.Preston, Golden Scepter, II.14.
3.Gataker, op. cit., p.204.
4.Ames, Cases of Conscience, p.208.
5.Dod, Ten Commandments; Perkins, Works, II. p.330; Ames, op. cit., p.208.
6.One evidence of a difference of opinion as to whether even adultery necessarily broke the marriage covenant is found in William Whately's writings. In his earlier book, The Bride-bvsh (1619) he admits that a breach of a duty which belongs to the very essence of marriage, such as "chastity and due benevolence" dissolves the bond. (pp.2-3). He reverses himself in a second work, A Care-Cloth (1624), in which he presents the objection sent him to the effect that the marriage bond remains undissolved as long as a man and woman "lawfully converse together in matrimoniall society." Now, continues the objector, even after adultery has been committed both partners may continue to "lawfully converse together," and certainly when adultery is committed in secret, the marriage continues. Whately confessed himself "swayed by these arguments" to which he admits he cannot "make a satisfying answer." Therefore, he departs from his earlier opinion, "wishing I had not written them." God's part in the covenant is here overlooked.

No man, however, has power in himself to keep this or any other holy covenant. The covenant of marriage depends upon power and ability from God in order for the couple to fulfill their promises. None should therefore enter into the covenant of marriage trusting in their own strength or without looking to God for help and assistance to perform the obligations assumed.

Marriage obligates the couple to undertake certain mutual duties. Once a man and woman enter into this covenant "then the word of God takes hold of them and bindes them to doe the duties" of a husband and a wife.[1] A man and woman may be married and "contracted before a thousand witnesses," says Gataker, but the one is not truly a husband nor the other truly a wife unless they do the duties stipulated in this covenant.[2] Yet merely to perform such duties is no more than heathens do; the Christian will do these duties "as unto God," and for the purpose of advancing God's glory. A man is not, therefore, a good husband or parent, or master or magistrate for that matter, unless he be a good Christian.[3]

The main duties of husband and wife are "chastitie" and "due benevolence" — "the restraining of themselves from all other persons, and the communicating of themselves each to other."[4] Faithfulness is essential to the well-being of this society, both parties promising that forsaking all others they are knit together till death do them part.[5]

More specifically, these duties include a loving affection one to another (a "special conjugall" love), a living together and sharing of the same house, table and bed; a coming together to be one flesh "with communion of bodies;" "a communication of estates and outward goods, at least as farre as to the use of them;" a communion in the ordinary worship of God, and a joint exercising of the government of the family.[1] This matrimonial covenant established a unity in which there is a sharing and "communicating of all good things."

---

[1] Mather, "Apology," *Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discvssed*, p.24; Whately, W., *The Bride-bvsh*, p.1.

[2] Gataker, *Good Wife God's Gift*, pp.152,158.

[3] Gataker, *Marriage Duties*, p.186.

[4] Whately, W., *The Bride-bvsh*, p.2-3.

[5] cf. Sibbes, *Works*, II. p.201; Preston, *Golden Scepter*, II.5-6.

And yet though there is said to be a "joint exercise of government", actually authority to rule is given the husband; he "must be taken for God's immediate officer in the home, and as it were the King in that family."[2] He governs by authority received immediately from God; while the wife, as his subordinate, only governs by authority derived from her husband. The husband must "governe his wife and maintaine her,"[3] and the wife must obey and assist her husband. And the husband is admonished to govern actively if he desires to have things go well in the family and yet to govern without bitterness or anger. For the husband to govern and for the wife to submit herself to her husband's rule is to obey God's command, and to act "in conscience of the order and ordinance of God."[4] Neither the government of the husband nor the reverence and obedience of the wife must extend to anything against the will of God. Thus does this covenant both bind together husband and wife and limit their relationship.

In summary, this is the traditional picture of the family with the husband and wife as the superior and inferior respectively, but bound together by a covenant. Because of the covenant the role of

---

1. Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, pp.125-6;132,151. Ames, Cases of Conscience, V.37.1-6 pp.205-6.
2. Whately, W., Bride bvsh, p.89.
3. ibid., p.97.
4. Gataker, Marriage Duties, p.197.

the wife is somewhat modified for she is considered a servant no longer but a companion.[1] But though the wife is inferior in authority to her husband, yet because their covenant of marriage is also a covenant with God, she is in some respects an equal. The covenant of marriage binds her not only to her husband but also to God, and implicit in the covenant is that though in respect to her husband the wife may be inferior, in light of their common relation to God they are equals. The use of the idea of covenant in marriage not only emphasizes mutual consent in this relationship but also connotes an equality between husband and wife and their common obligations not only to each other but to God.

A variety of relationships, besides the basic one of hubband and wife, are found in the family. There is also, for instance, the natural relationship of parents and children, which was not applicable to covenant terms as are voluntary human relations. And since the family in this period was also the economic unit, there was another important voluntary relationship, that between master and servant. Here, as between husband and wife, there is an element of consent, for "there must be triall and iudgment of ech others meetnes for their linkings and callings."[2] Servitude, according to these Puritans, is not based upon nature, but is undertaken "by voluntary consent."[3] Servants are obligated to reverence their masters in speech and carriage, showing "dutiful obeysance," "respectfull behaviour," and ready obedience "to that which their masters will have done."[4] Masters, in turn, are expected to deal justly with their servants, offering them fair recompense and not being inordinate in their demands and treatment. They do not have an absolute but only "a limited Dominion" over their servants, and should "beare themselves towards their servants with humanity and meekenesse; not impirously and domineering."[1]

---

[1] Ames, "Commentary on First Peter", in Works, p.70.
[2] Browne, R., A Booke which sheweth..
[3] Ames, Cases of Conscience, p.159.
[4] Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, pp.333,340.

Although Anabaptists, "who teach that all are alike, and that there is no difference betwixt masters & servants," are denounced,[2] yet "an equality betwixt Masters and Servants in relation to God" is affirmed. In "outward dignity" there is a great difference between masters and servants, "yet as servants of God they are of like condition."[3] With respect to "life spirituall," there is no difference between them, for master and servant alike are called "to liberty and glory in Christ."[4]

This equality before God is affirmed to caution masters as to the limits of their authority. Both as a "spur" to perform the duties required of them and as a "curb" to restrain them "from doing anything to their Servants but what they can be able to iustifie unto their owne Master," masters are reminded of the subjection in which they themselves stand to God and to other men.[5] The master is subject to the civil magistrate as well as to God and accountable to them both for the manner in which he carries himself and exerts authority towards his servants. Through such warnings it was trusted that the relation between master and servant would be indeed one of mutual benefit and justice. Here too the covenant mutually entered into by master and servant not only binds each to the other but both to God. God is the third party of this covenant, just as he was in the covenant between husband and wife. The significance of this covenant is not merely the affirming of "voluntary consent" between master and servant in their relations but also to define the limitations of authority.[1]

---

[1] Ames, Cases of Conscience, p.161.
[2] Gouge, op. cit., p.331.
[3] ibid., p.385.
[4] Ames, "Commentary on First Peter", p.61 in Works.
[5] Gouge, op. cit., p.384; also Ainsworth, Communion of Saints, p.392.

---

[1] Another covenant in which God is considered a third party is that between a minister and the members of his church. All major Puritan groups wrote of this relation in terms of covenant, though congregationalists and separatists emphasized it more than presbyterians. (for early Presbyterian use of this covenant see Usher, R.G. (ed.), The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth as illustrated by the Minute Book of the Dedham Classis (1905) pp.45,46). Congregationalists and separatists regarded this covenant essential and necessary. (Cf. Ames, Cases of Conscience, pp.69-70; Browne, Booke which sheweth..; Ball, Answer to Two Treatises of Iohn Can, I. p.24; Goodwin, T., Works, XI. p.492; Jacob, H., Short Treatise, p.93; Robinson, Works, II. p.396-7) No minister should thrust himself upon or be appointed to a church, but he must be the choice of the whole body inorder to exercise authority over them. The church can be governed only by their free consent; therefore, a covenant expressing mutual choice is necessary. Ames was strong in feeling that every congregation have the right to choose their ministers (cf. Ames, Second Manvdiction for M^r Robinson,p.12) Without such an agreement the people are not bound to be ruled, exhorted, or admonished by the pastor. Among Congregationalists the government of the church was a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, with Christ, the minister and elders, and the people each respectively having a part in determining the affairs of the society. While "the chief right" of calling ministers is in Christ, as the head of the church, "the delegated right" belongs to the whole body of the particular congregation. By common consent the people make a covenant with a pastor, who has been called by God, to be their minister. Before the election of a minister, the people are described as free to choose this or that man, though they are obligated to make some choice. When once the minister is chosen, and a covenant made, then his weaknesses are to be borne with, because the covenant, being divine, cannot arbitrarily be broken. A minister once chosen cannot be set aside except as God in his Word gives "power and warrant for." By mutual agreement, however, the covenant can be abrogated. By this covenant the people are obligated to love and reverence the minister, to submit themselves to his ministry, "to obey the doctrine of the minister, taught truly out of the word of God," and to provide "sufficient" maintenance for him. The minister in turn is bound "to preach the pure word of God in season and out of season," and "to be an example and patterne vnto his people, in loue, in faith, in patience, and in euery good worke." Once called to a church the minister can "neither forsake it at his own will, or be cast out from it without just cause," nor can he neglect the care of the church without breaking his covenant. (Cf. Ames, Marrow, p.180) The affirmation of the freedom of the people to choose their minister is significant as a revolt against the practices of the established church, but more so as evidence of a mutual responsibility which has overtones for constitutional government and democracy.

The Political Society.

The first and central affirmation which Puritans made of any social order was that all authority stemmed from God. God is "the absolute Governor of all the whole world."[1] He is the only absolute King in the world "and it stands with good reason that the absolute soveraigntie over all the Potentates on the earth shall be ascribed unto him."[2] God is not only the "author but the owner" of Kings as well as all peoples. He is the "disposer of all things" and he will "call all the Kings of this earth to a reckoning." Job, as well as Paul, is cited to show that "God is the fountaine of all power and wisdome...that there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God."[3] While this is no more than is asserted about governors of other societies, whether they be fathers, husbands, masters or ministers, practically every discussion of the nature of the political society makes special reference to this belief as a reminder of the true source of power and authority. The application of this doctrine to politics was fraught with special significance.

Probably this importance is best explained by the political dilemma in which these men found themselves. Prior to the open struggle between king and parliament, one of the pressing problems of political import confronting Puritans was satisfactorily to defend and prove their allegiance to the king. In face of the official view in Elizabethan and Stuart England that the form of ecclesiastical society should harmonize with the political society and should be determined by the political soveraign, any one seeking reform of the church was consequently suspect of disloyalty to the crown. From the beginning Puritans of all types were repeatedly accused of sedition and of disloyalty to their sovereign. Their challenge to and criticism of the church was interpreted as a challenge to the state, and this became especially pronounced as King James by his formula, "No bishop, no king," bound together the Stuart monarchy and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

---

[1] Dod, John, Lord's Prayer, p.212.
[2] ibid., p.208.
[3] Downame, Christian Warfare (4th ed. 1634) II.311.

It therefore became necessary for Puritans to take every opportunity to argue their loyalty to the monarch. Their many tracts give ample evidence of their willing submission to the political authority of the king. But both for Elizabeth and the early Stuarts such affirmations were highly unsatisfactory in view of continued Puritan opposition to the established church. This opposition continued to be interpreted as opposition to royal supremacy and therefore treason.

But if fundamentally political authority stems from God, then it follows that all governors of the political society, the princes and lesser magistrates, are ordained by God to exercise rule. They assume the functions of their office as God's vicegerents, ruling for him. They are "the Ministers of God," acting as "his substitutes."[1] Magistrates are "instead of God," but they must not be equalized with God. They are "Gods and sonnes of God"not by nature but by "authority and power conferred upon them from God."[2]

God is clearly superior to all earthly rulers and therefore, they are accountable to him. Since the office of the magistrate is from God, rulers are reminded that their authority must be used to further God's ends. Princes are gently reminded:

---

[1] Downame, op. cit., p.311; also Dod, op. cit., p.212.

[2] Gataker, Gods parley with princes (1620) p.7. Henry Smith says of the magistrate: "I rule for God, I speak for God, I judge for God, I reward for God, I correct for God; then as he would do and determine, so must be my sentence." (Works, p.360)

> "Remember oft that you have a superiour in heaven, that you are his servant, and deputie, governing under him; that all your authority, is from him, and all that you doe, in governing, must be for him, and how at last a time will come when you must give account to him of your Government."[1]

This view formed the basis of a covenant between God and the king. Biblical precedence for this was found in the example of King Josiah, II Chronicles xxxiv.31 and in Nehemiah x.[2] In the ordaining of kings, reports Greenham, "we know...vowes were made from them to the Lord." According to this covenant the king pledges obedience to the rule and law of God, while God on his part "hath covenanted prosperity and stability onely to those Princes that cherish and advance true Religion and uphold his owne work."[3] All the blessings pertaining to a king and to his people rest upon the faithful keeping of such a covenant.

It follows that magistrates, though superior to their fellow men, are themselves "under authority" to God. Though they are the highest among men, yet kings have One above them to whose government they are subject. It is most fitting and proper for a king to humble himself before God. "It is no shame for the greatest Monarch of the earth to abase himself when hee hath to doe with God."[4] For though "they are gods downeward, to those that under them, yet if they look upward, what are Kings?" They are mere men of "the same metall" as others and like all other men they shall die. Therefore, it is right that magistrates should show "a proportionable thankfulnesse" to God who has preferred them above other men to be heads of the people.

---

[1] Scudder, Christians Daily Walke, p.55.
[2] Greenham, Works, p.589; Sibbes, Saints Cordiall, p.23.
[3] Taylor, T., Works, p.267.
[4] Sibbes, op. cit., p.22.

This relationship of God and king bound by a covenant was open to two interpretations. One was advanced by the Stuarts and their faithful adherents in the affirmation of the divine right of kings, and the other by certain Puritans. James I in discussing monarchy calls it "the true patterne of Diuinitie," and asserts that "Kings are called Gods" because they sit upon God's throne here on earth.[1] He offers Scripture to prove this.[2] According to him, the king is accountable to God only.

Charles I not only affirmed this philosophy but practised it by exercising willful personal government. It was his belief that

> "Hee is not bound to giue an account to any, but to God only, whose immediate Lieutenant and Vice-gerent Hee is, in these His Realmes and Dominions, by the diuine prouidence committed to His Charge and Gouernement."[3]

Charles affirmed his allegiance and subjection to God, "who is the Lord of hosts, and unto whose prouidence and good pleasure, His Maiestie doeth and shall euer submit himselfe and all His endeauours."[4] But the corollary which follows is that the king is in no sense accountable to the people he governs. "A king is not servus populi..but Minister Dei."[5] If he transgresses, none but God can call the king to account. Though he be wicked and unjust, yet he is God's anointed, and therefore, sacred.[6] Since the king alone is the author of the laws of the commonwealth, according to this interpretation, he is above law and not bound by it. Whatever the King commands must be obeyed, and he who resists the king resists God. "Kings," wrote David Owen in 1610, "have supreame and absolute authority under God on Earth," and all

---

[1] James, The True Lawe of Free Monarchies (1603) pp.4,5.

[2] Psalm lxxxii.6; Psalm ci; II Kings xviii; II Chronicles xxix.

[3] Charles, A Declaration of the True Cavses which moued His Majestie to assemble and after inforced Him to dissolue..Parliament (1626) p.2

[4] ibid., p.13.

[5] Symmons, E., A Loyall Subjects Beliefe (1643) p.3.

[6] A Treatise in Justification of the King (Oxford,1642) p.5.

> "stand bound in law, allegiance, and conscience, to obey their pleasure...or to abide their punishment. And Kings themselves are no way subject to the controule, censure, or punishment of any earthly man, but reserved by special prerogative to the most fearfull and righteous judgment of God."[1]

The Puritan view of this covenant between God and king was essentially similar in content but interpreted differently. Whereas the king's followers emphasized the supreme power of the king by which he made and dispensed law according to his pleasure, the Puritans, especially the Independents, stressed the king's subordination to God and his obligation to rule by law. For them the essence of this covenant is that the king agreed to bind himself to rule by God's laws. Magistrates ruling for God "must rule by the prescript of God and do no thing but as their conscience tells them that God would do himself."[2] Kings admittedly are "more stoutly tyed" to account to God "for all their thoughts, words, and workes" than any subject in his realm is answerable to the king.[3] Here in distinction to the royalist emphasis on the extent of kingly power, the stress is upon the limitation of the king's authority. "Laws are "some bridle to bad Princes; And as a very wall about Gouernment."[4] Henry Parker attributes the difficulties of the commonwealth to "the common court doctrine that Kings are boundlesse in authority."[5] Paul's injunction to be subject unto all powers because all power is from God was interpreted as a limitation upon authority rather than an injunction to absolute power and obedience.[6]

---

[1] Owen, David, Herod and Pilate (1610) p.30. The bishops supported the king in such opinions as Laud's speech before Parliament, June 19, 1626 testifies when he called the King "God's immediate lieutenant upon earth and therefore one and the same action is God's by ordinance and the kings by execution." (Gardiner, History of England, VI p204.

[2] Smith, [illegible], Works, pp.357-8.

[3] Dod, op. cit., p.210; Gataker, Gods Parley with Princes, p.12.

[4] An Offer to Ovr Late Soueraigne..of a Digest to be made of the Lawes of England (1629) p.140.

[5] Parker, H., Case of Shipmony, p.34.

[6] Cf. Gent, J.S., Malignancy Un-Masked (1642) p.4.

But these Puritans did not stop at this point in their discussion of political society. Beside God as the supreme authority, and the magistrate as God's appointed lieutenant, the political order is also composed of subjects. As Gataker reminds his readers, "God is interested in the people as well as the prince."[1] The relationship of the king and his people, which is essentially a voluntary relationship, was also described by a covenant.

To understand the basis for this covenant it is necessary to call to mind the fundamental differences of opinion as to the relation of the ecclesiastical and political societies. Brownists completely divorced church and state and denied the monarch any authority in church matters. Presbyterians believed in a state church, and looked to the civil authority to reform the church according to the presbyterian pattern. The congregationalists (non-separatists) denied the magistrate power to determine the nature or form of the ecclesiastical society, but admitted his authority to insure the maintenance and preservation of true religion in the realm.

These varying Puritan positions were further complicated by the officially held assumption of the Anglicans of the unity of church and state pattern of government. For them the king was the supreme governor of the church as well as the state. The congregationalists, on the basis of their principles, affirmed that ecclesiastical and political government are entirely separate and distinct and that the form of one does not necessarily follow from the other. This theory circumvented the charge that by their desire to reform the church according to

---

[1] Gataker, Gods Parley with Princes, pp.80-83.

God's Word they were seeking to reform the state. The episcopal prelates defended the hierarchy of archbishops and bishops as the best form of church government because it was analagous to government by monarchy which was the best form of civil government. Since government by bishops was monarchical in character, therefore, it was the only church government agreeable to monarchy.[1] The Independents, on the other hand, composed of persons of congregationalist and separatist opinions, attacked this thesis by likening bishop's rule to tyranny and as being inimical to monarchy in that bishops "encroached in the prerogatives of princes," and meddled in civil affairs.[2] The Independents hailed the distinction between the two societies as the theory which gave the king the greatest freedom to rule.

Among episcopalians the partly aristocratic and partly democratic form of church government of the Independents was regarded a direct challenge to the king. They based such a conclusion upon the assumption that whatever government was advocated for the church must be followed in the state and vice versa. The issue was joined when the Independents explicitly denied that church government needed to conform to the civil polity or the state to ecclesiastical polity. Obviously the Puritans who went to Holland and emigrated to America had little need to develop such a theory; they solved the problem by moving elsewhere. But the Independents who remained in England, Henry Burton, Thomas Goodwin, John Milton, and others, found it necessary to differentiate between civil and ecclesiastical government and to affirm that the form of one does not necessarily depend upon or follow after the form of the other. There is, Burton believes, "a vast disproportion between a civill government and ecclesiasticall:"

---

[1] Cf. Milton, J., Of Reformation, p.41; also Stoughton, Wm., An Assertion for True and Christian Church-Policie (1604) p.206 & pp.8-9.

[2] Stoughton, op. cit., p.357

> "the one established upon man's lawes, the other on Gods; the one various and variable according to severall Civill States, Kingdomes and Lawes; the other one and the same (or should be, if right) in all the Churches of the Saints, having one Rule, one Law to walke by, immutable."[1]

Thomas Goodwin similarly argues that to make the government of churches conform to the government of cities is "to make a worldly government the pattern of ecclesiastical..and then the same degrees of officers of superiority and inferiority that is in cities should be in ecclesiastical government."[2]

Consequently from the Puritan point of view the advocacy of aristocratic and democratic government for the church was in no sense interpreted to be a threat to political monarchy. They claimed no inconsistency in supporting monarchy in one society and aristocratic-democratic government in another. As William Stoughton put it, surely "the Monarch of Monarches...is able and readie to vphold the state of al Monarchies in common weales; togither with the state of Aristocracie in his Church."[3] Moreover the element of monarchy is not altogether absent in the church since Christ is its King and ruling head.[4] Thus, according to Barrowists and Independents the church had a mixed government of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and even Robert Browne accepted the element of monarchy though he disclaimed any aristocracy in his advocacy of ecclesiastical government by the people.

But neither the king nor his bishops found convincing the statement that the government of churches can truly be "adjudged Monarchical by reason the same is deduced from our heavenly and everlasting Monarch." The Puritans were never able to satisfy the Court and the Establishment that the ecclesiastical hierarchy could be replaced and the discipline by pastors and elders planted "without any derogation to the Kings Royal prerogative, any indignitie to the three Estates in Parliament, or any greater alteration of the laudable Laws, Statutes, or Customes of the Realme, then may well be made without damage to the people."[1] The Puritans maintained that no possible harm could come from a form of church government clearly authorized by God in his holy Word. Since God's Word could not be contradictory, his true church government must obviously harmonize with his duly constituted political government.

---

[1] Burton, H., Vindiciae veritatis, p.5 The view that God had not ordained a precise form of political society was the basis upon which this separation of church and state orders was made. See pp.268-269 at beginning of this chapter.

[2] Goodwin, Works, XI.p.191; Cf. Milton, Of Reformation in England, pp44-5.

[3] Stoughton, op. cit., p.359.

[4] ibid., p.358; Ames, Marrow, pp.144-5; Cartwright, T., First Reply to Whitgift.

Fundamentally Puritan political thinking, as expressed by the congregationalists mostly, ran counter to Anglican views in maintaining that the particular form of government to be established in the commonwealth had not been prescribed by God but been left for men to determine. The Anglicans, certainly through the reign of the early Stuarts, were certain that monarchy was ordained by God and was the best of all forms of government. They pointed out that God established monarchy among his chosen people, the Israelites, and even established it in Adam before there were people.[2] Since God had never changed this government but expected it to be adopted by all men everywhere, the Royalists denied men had any choice in determining its form. As Henry Parker stated it, these men tenaciously held "one universall forme of government as necessary to all Nations, and that not the moderate and equall neither, but such as ascribes all to Soveraignty, nothing at all to popular libertie."[1] In contrast, Parker, along with other Independents, urged toleration of differing civil governments among various peoples and denied that one single form was authorized to the exclusion of any other. The Royalist belief led Nathaniel Fiennes to say in Parliament that to claim monarchy as "an ordinance of God, of Divine Right," thereby implying "Aristocracies and Democracies are wicked formes of Government contrary to the Ordinance of God...is such new Divinity as I never read in any Book, but in this new Booke of Canons."[2]

---

[1] Stoughton, op. cit., pp.350-1.

[2] A Paradox That Designe upon Religion was not the cause of State Misgovernment: but an effect of it. (1644) p.84.

This wide latitude in the character of the political realm was exceptional in Puritan philosophy, for there is no comparable freedom of expression assigned to any other social order. Most Puritans, whether inclined to presbyterianism or independency, were methodical and meticulous in delineating and describing all aspects of life and duties under all foreseeable circumstances. But in actuality this political freedom was somewhat more theoretical than real, for these same Puritans agreed that monarchy was well fitted to preserve pure Christian doctrine and the true worship of God. They may have found justification for such a conclusion in the precedent and example of the kingdom of Israel, or they may have been merely affirming loyalty to the government under which they lived. Yet to have advocated anything different would have meant to be immediately charged with treason. It would probably be fair to conclude that these men did not follow Calvin's opinion that politically "either aristocracy or a mixture of aristocracy and democracy far excels all others," as closely as his admonition that "it is our duty to be obedient to any governors whom God has established over the places in which we reside."[1]

---

[1] Parker, H., Case of Shipmony, p.8.

[2] Fiennes, N., A Second Speech of the Honourable Nathaniel Fiennes... Touching the Subjects Liberty against the late Canons and the New Oath. (1641) p.3.

The Puritan political position affirms at one and the same time the conservative principle, which supports the existing order, and the revolutionary principle with its implications that no particular form of political government is divine and therefore, it may be readily changed. This latter principle meant, as Henry Parker pointed out in 1642, that "God is no more the author of Regall than of Aristocraticall power."[2] Such a thesis rigorously held basically undermined the contention of the English royalists that God had established the king in his royal office "mot mediately, but immediately."[3] In the sense that he was the magistrate the Independents admitted he ruled as God's lieutenant, but they denied that his office as king was divinely instituted. And if this particular form of government was not established by God, then men at one time had determined it as the one most appropriate to their needs. In which case it was quite possible that, theoretically, men could recommend a different type of government as more beneficial. In practice the emphasis upon loyalty to the existing government moderated the danger of such revolutionary doctrine, but the possibility of change in the political realm nevertheless remained present. The existing form of government is to be obeyed since civil authority is ordained by God, but kings are proclaimed to be first the ordinances of men, and then confirmed by God's ordinance.[4]

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, IV.20.8.
[2] Parker, H., Observations Upon Some of His Majesties Late Answers & Expresses (1642) p.1.
[3] A Paradox That Designe upon Religion was not the cause.... p.122.
[4] Cf. Fiennes, N., op. cit., pp.3,4.

Politically important for the future was this recognition that the people had the power to determine the government best suited to their needs. This affirmation, clearly stated by Ames and later by others in the ensuing struggles with the king, provided the groundwork for a theory of social contract in England. Specifically, it provided the Parliamentary party the foothold it needed to develop a justifiable opposition to the king.

The Independents in the 1640s took this theory of the human determination of the commonwealth as fundamental to their rapidly maturing political philosophy. They asserted that the people had entrusted their government to a king who in turn was responsible to the people. Ames would probably have been horrified at the way in which his lack of divine sanction to monarchy came to be interpreted and applied, for there is no indication that he considered it a basis upon which Englishmen not only would resist but overthrow the monarchy. Among the earlier Puritans this theory was interpreted to demonstrate quite the opposite, namely, that they had no intention of seeking to reform the political order. For since God had authorized no pattern to which the political government should conform, no prior principle existed upon which political reformation could be undertaken. Consequently, it was affirmed that Christians could live peacefully and obediently under a variety of political governments and were to pledge allegiance to the government already established.[1] Nevertheless, their initial assumption that men determined the form of the political order signified that the commonwealth had neither the stability nor the divine character of the church or the family.

---

[1] Cf. Stoughton, op. cit., p.359.

The political order, therefore, was of a mixed origin. Political authority was ordained by God, and obedience and subjection to the rule of the magistrate was enjoined. But the Independents affirmed that since God did not specify the exact form political society should take, men had freedom to determine the form best suited to them. Implicitly or explicitly men enter into a covenant to form a civil society and to give a prince authority to rule. Just as for spiritual purposes men join together in a covenant to form a church, so for "a common civill good" they join together in covenant to establish a political order.

Explicit references to such a covenant as the basis of a city or state is not common before the struggle between king and parliament became sharpened.[1] This would infer that such a covenant was not an area in which early Puritan thinking centered. It did not catch the imagination, possibly because these men had no inclination and felt no need to challenge the monarchy. To do so was abhorent and not seriously countenanced. They did not conceive their problem in political terms. The groundwork, however, for this covenant was laid by men like Ames, as well, of course, by the influence of continental covenant thinking -- especially the Huguenot *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, -- and by earlier English political thinking -- especially John Ponet --, but the full development of the idea of political covenant seems to have come only as circumstances warranted and necessitated it in the heat of the political struggle of the 1630s and 1640s.

But quite possibly other factors mitigated against the active espousal of such a covenant. Its assumptions tended to contradict certain Puritan tenets and theological beliefs. For example, there is the implied supposition that there was a time in the beginning when political society was non-existent. Such an hypothesis hardly fits into the Biblical story of the origin of man and of society. On the basis of Genesis government was established with Adam, and there was no pre-political period in human history. Likewise the political covenant implies that a person may conceivably stand outside the commonwealth if he should choose not to become a part of a city or state. This was a perfectly possible assumption when applied to marriage or to church membership, but it contradicts the Puritan contention that all men are within the political society and under the authority of some political governor. Natural man is not considered fit to be his own governor, but must of necessity be ruled by someone.[1] And again the idea of political covenant infers that power resides in the people, whereas this was certainly not advocated by Puritans in the early decades of the seventeenth century. It is therefore possible to speculate that these implications of a civil covenant were fraught with innovations and contradictions difficult to assimilate and that these men were not able to make the full logical application of the covenant to this third society. The very fact, however, that the political covenant, despite all its drawbacks, was admitted at all is indicative of the way in which new ideas were making their way alongside older traditional religious and social concepts.

---

[1] It is, however, clearly noted in Ames, *Marrow*, p.141 and in Goodwin, T., *Works*, XI. p.493. Sibbes, *Works*, VI. p.64; Browne, *Booke which sheweth*.. Ainsworth, *Communion of Saints*, p.354.

When the conflict between Parliament and king broke into the open in all its pent-up force with the convening of the Long Parliament and events rapidly led to the flight of Charles from London to York and the outbreak of civil war, the basic question pertaining to government which confronted Parliamentary leaders was whether subjects were justified in taking up arms against the king. This had to be answered clearly and affirmatively in order to validate the Parliamentary position. Essentially the pressing question was the recurrent one of what right, if any, the people had to resist their rulers by force. The writers on political theory who supported Parliament, led by Henry Parker, chose to deal with this problem by searching into the origins of political society. There is no indication that the earlier Puritan preachers mentioning the civil covenant ever formally raised the question of political origins.

---

[1] Sibbes, R., Works, V., pp.337-8.

In the 1640s the question of the origin of political society was answered by Independents with a theory of covenant. Their primary tenet was that power originally had been lodged in the people.

> "All Mankind...are naturally free & so not bound to part with that freedome...unlesse they see a necessitie, or at least a great advantage, for Gods Honour and their owne and others good."[1]

Men become subjects only by their willing consent and agreement, when for the common good they entrust their protection into the hands of a ruler. By a free and voluntary covenant the people submit themselves to the rule of a king on condition that he govern for the welfare of the people. Salus populi, according to Henry Parker, is "the Paramount Law" and even the "law of Prerogative itself is subservient to this Law."[2] The welfare of the people takes precedence over the welfare and safety of the king. No free people in their right minds, it is contended, would ever willingly have submitted to become the slaves of another or to become subjects at all unless it were to their benefit and general good.[1]

---

[1] Scripture and Reason Pleaded for Defensive Armes. (1643) p.30.

[2] Parker, Observations Upon Some of His Majesties Answers... p.3.

The existence of this original covenant made by the people and the king contradicted the Royalist view that monarchy was God's creation by "authoratative commission," and "the only government which is most countenanced and magnified in holy Writ."[2] In their eyes to make the king dependent upon human election rather than divine appointment is to degrade him and to do away with his dignity and power. It is to "robbe Kings of their Sacred and divine Right and Prerogative,"[3] and to erect "a coequal, a corival power...two Soveraignes, a thing incompatible with Supremacy and Monarchie." To derive kings from the people, continues this same anonymous writer, is "a great disgrace to Kings; for it maketh them the basest extract of the basest of rationall creatures, the Community."[4]

The actual position of the Royalists was that no covenant existed between the king and his subjects. The king was free of any bonds and tied to no laws. James I, in a speech to Parliament in 1609, did refer to "a paction" which the king makes to the people and which he compares to "that paction which God made with Noah after the deluge."[5] Off-hand this appears to admit the existence of a covenant, until it is remembered that God's covenant with Noah was in effect a promise and not a mutual agreement. It was simply the action of God in which man promises nothing in return. James adopted covenant terminology without endorsing the real intent of a covenant with mutual promises upon certain conditions. To infer from this passage, as John Locke seems to have done in the opening pages of his "Treatise of Government," that James accepted the idea of a contract between himself and his subjects is hardly warranted.

---

[1] Scripture and Reason Pleaded for Defensive Armes, p.40.

[2] Symmons, Ed., A Loyall Subjects Beliefe.. (1643) p.7; also see dedicatory epistle of anonymous tract, Sacro-sancta Regum Majestas, or The Sacred and Royall Prerogative (Oxford, 1644).

[3] Sacro-sancta Regum Majestas, p.3.

[4] ibid., p.45.

[5] Harleian Miscellany, I. p.11.

In an earlier writing, The True Lawe of Free Monarchie, James wrote,

> "As to this contract alledged made at the coronation of a King, although I denie any such contract to be made then, especially containing such a clause irritant, as they alledge: yet I confesse, that a king at his coronation, or at the entry to his kingdome, willingly promiseth to his people, to discharge honourably and truly the office given him by God over them."[1]

Here James explicitly denies "a mutuall paction and contract" between the king and people, which if it is broken by one party frees the other of the obligation entered into. In his opinion a king at his coronation makes no more than a promise to the people to observe "the fundamentall laws" of the kingdom.

As later interpreted by Charles I the coronation oath was to "discharge that trust for the good and safety of Our people" with which God has intrusted him.[2] And Henry Ferne, a royalist supporter, in his highly controversial tract, The Resolving of Conscience (1642), grudgingly admits that upon the king's accession to the throne he does promise and bind himself by oath to "something like a covenant", but emphatically denies that any conditions are appended.[1] He challenged his opponents to show that by covenant the king and people enter into an agreement that if the king fails to perform his part the people have a right to resist him.[2]

---

[1] James, The True Lawe of Free Monarchie, p.51.

[2] His Maiesties Answer to a Printed Book Intituled A Remonstrance or Declaration of the Lords and Commons now assembled in Parliament 20 May 1642. (York, 1642) p.6.

The Royalists admit that some nations make a contract with their king, but not England. The English king is adjudged "a free Monarch" who derives his powers immediately from God.[3] He is accountable only to God and in no wise bound by any promise to earthly men.[4] There is no Scriptural basis, writes Edward Symmons to Stephen Marshall, for a covenant between the king and the people. Covenants in the Old Testament, he asserts, were only taken "by the people to their King or by the King and the people together unto the Lord."[5] Consequently, Symmons concludes, the idea of a covenant between king and people did not originate in the Old Testament, but is "the Infant of later times" and arises from an unwarranted distrust and suspicion which the people have towards their king.

James I. had raised an additional objection to this covenant by asking "who should be iudge of the breake" even supposing such a covenant did exist? He maintains that neither party can be "both partie and iudge in his owne cause" and therefore that God alone must be the judge.[6] James could willingly accept this conclusion since once again it puts the issue in God's hands and denies the people any part in government.

---

[1] Ferne,H., The Resolving of Conscience, p.16; Cf. Symmons, op.cit., p.41.

[2] Ferne, op. cit., p.16: "From a promise the king makes for doing justice..to infer a great obligation lieth upon him is right, but to gather thence to forfeiture of his power upon the not performance is a plain, but dangerous, inconsequent argument."

[3] Ball, William, A Caveat for Subjects (1642) p.6.

[4] Symmons, op. cit., p.3.

[5] ibid., p.41

[6] James, op. cit., p.26.

In contrast to these arguments supporters of Parliament maintained that a "reciprocal oath" existed between the king and people in which the king promised to protect and defend his subjects and to maintain the laws of the realm;while the people promised to obey the king who kept his oath. In the opinion of William Prynne the coronation oath taken by the king was a promise to be subject to the laws of the land, and Prynne regards the oath of the people as dependent upon the faithfulness of the king to his part of the agreement.[1]

Presbyterians and Independents regarded it an error for the king "to think he holds all from God, and nothing from his Subjects."[2] They readily agreed that that power "which is obedience or order" is immediately from God, but "the faculty or power of presenting a King unto that power is in the people."[3] Kings are indeed instituted by God, but they are elected by men, so that both God and the people may correctly be said to have a part in their making.[4] If, on the principle that no particular form of government more than another is established by God, then government, as Charles Herle wrote, "must be then humano jure, from the peoples consent."[5] This meant that kings are chosen by men before they are ordained of God and yet

> "truely their power is as just and their subjects alleagence as due unto them though we suppose them to be first ordinances of men, and then confirmed and est-

---

[1] Prynne, Wm., A Soveraigne Antidote... (1642) p.23.
[2] The Aphorisms of the Kingdom (1642) p.5.
[3] An Answer to Mis-led Doctor Fearne (1642) pp.8-9.
[4] Romans xiii.1 and II Peter are cited to show that kings were the ordinance of men as well as of God.
[5] Herle, C., A Fuller Answer to a Treatise Written by Doctor Ferne (1642) p.6.

> ablished by Gods ordinance, as if we suppose them to be immediate ordinances of God and so received by men."[1]

God, because he ordains men to live under authority and government, ratifies the covenant by which the people vest their rights in a king to rule over them.

A more moderate member of Parliament, like Dudley Digges, the lawyer and diplomat, gave expression to the idea of a social compact but interprets it as an argument for supporting and defending the king. He is concerned about the "disturbers of the state" who "hope in a new compact to gaine a greater share in the rule."[2] He defines anarchy and the "want of all Law and Rulers" as"a multitude of people, like a heape of stones, before they are cemented and knit together into one building." Digges denounces populi salus, suprema lex, and believes monarchy is the government "which will convey to us the greatest goods." The mutual compact made by the people voluntarily he regards as placing supreme authority in a king and leaving no justification for resistance by the people.[2]

A basic corollary of this original covenant is that political power resides in the king as a trust from the people. The people have entrusted their protection, their rights and priviledges to the king, yet they "have not left that trust without all manner of limits."[3] Should this power be abused, the people can call for it back again. The people are not left without recourse in case of tyranny, nor is it true that once a king had been established he must be tolerated for better or worse. No kingdom is left without the means to defend itself, and therefore Parliament could say that when "the Royall Trust cannot be or is not discharged" then "the wisdome of this State hath intrusted the Houses of Parliament with a Power to supply what shall be wanting on the part of the Princes."[1] Such an alternative was deemed necessary and preferable "in this Case of extreame Danger and his Maiesties Refusall" rather than that the kingdom should be forced "to returne to its first Principles, and every man left to doe what is right in his owne eyes, without either guide or Rule."[2] Upon such reasoning Parliament built its case to support the raising of an army to oppose the forces of the king. In dire necessity and to preserve the kingdom against enemies, both within and without, the supporters of Parliament argued that the power misused by the king reverts back to the people so they may defend themselves.

---

[1] Fiennes, N., A Second Speech... (1641) p.4.
[2] The Vnlawfulnesse of Subjects taking up Armes against their Soveraigne in what case soever. (1643) p.3.
[3] Parker, Observations... p.8.

Accordingly much emphasis was placed upon the king covenanting to rule according to law. Not merely to rule by his own laws as the Royalists would maintain, but by the established laws of the realm. "The Lawes and not the King doe command,"[3] for the law is superior to the king. Government by law being the ground and condition of the covenant, the people are bound to obey the king as long as he rules according to the laws.

> "..an oath is a covenant and when the covenant is broken, they that covenanted with the covenant-breaker, are as free as they were before the covenant, he hath broke his oath, because he doth work as much as in him lieth in destroying the Lawes & so humane society would be destroyed, and as he is a tyrant, and a tyrant hath no right over any people, but is an enemy to his people."[4]

---

[1] *A Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom* (1642) p.16; see also *Englands Satisfaction in Eight Queries. Concerning the true place, Office and power of a King, according to Gods Word* (1643).

[2] *A Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom*, p.16.

[3] *The Aphorisms of the Kingdome* (October 6,1642)

[4] *An Answer to Mis-led Doctor Fearne* (1642) p.14; see also, *An Humble Remonstrance to His Maiesty, Against the Tax of Ship Money imposed* (1641) p.65.

James I had maintained that the king was superior to the law and in no way necessarily bound by it, yet that "a good King will not onely delight to rule his subiects by the Law, but euen will conforme himselfe in his owne actions thereunto."[1] However, James is clear that this is simply a voluntary concession on the part of the king, made out of his good will and his desire to be a good example to his subjects, and not because he is bound by a covenant to observe the law. James thereby maintains the freedom and supremacy of the king at the same time that he recognized rule by law as valid.

The new developing political temper demanded that the king be not left free but be considered bound by covenant with the people to rule by law. This question of the relation of king and law, the controversy over government by law versus government by personal whim and fancy, was a fundamental issue which the covenant attempted to answer. Its advocates insisted that the king and people are contracted with the law as the binding force. The laws of the land are compared to the "Ligatures" which

> "doe bind, unite and fasten the Hand and Body, the King and his Subjects together, and which both Princes and People are bound by mutuall Covenant and Sacred Oath to maintaine."[2]

Government according to established law thereby replaces personal government in this covenant of king and people; government by arbitrary power gives way to government according to an agreed upon framework of order and freedom. The governing power of the king is limited by the general welfare and by needs of the people. This was the direction in which this covenant pointed and therefore formed the philosophical basis upon which the king could be logically opposed.

---

[1] James, op. cit., p.34.

[2] Prynne, Wm., Lord Bishops None of the Lords Bishops (1640)

This is a covenant warranted by Scripture and examples from Old Testament history and comparison with the covenant of Jehoida and Josiah are offered to support it.[1] It is made in the presence of God, and cements a relationship ordained by God in his government of the world and of man. In a sense, therefore, it is God's covenant. In this covenant the magistrate promises to "be the Lords..and to order all things in their kingdome according to God's work."[2] After the example of Jehoida, "the King promised but to Rule the people righteously, according to the will of God, and the people to be subject to the King so ruling."[3] The duties required in this covenant are said to be no more than God required in his covenant of salvation. In fitting this pattern to England the coronation of the king with the accompanying oath was interpreted as the explicit rendering of the covenant between king and people.

From this covenant between the king and the people, and the covenant between the king and God, it follows that the king is in no sense a supreme or arbitrary ruler. The theory of divine right of kings with all its implications is directly opposed by a theory of covenant which limits the authority and power of the ruler and gives to the people some voice in their government. Ames baldly asserts that the magistrate's power is not absolute but suffers from "a double limitation," one from the will of God, the other from the will of man.[4]

---

[1] Cf. II Chronicles xxiii.16; xxxiv.29-32; II Kings xi.17.

[2] Ainsworth, Communion of Saints, p.354.

[3] Mather, Church Government, II. pp.7-8. References to such a covenant became more numerous in treatises in the late 1630s. In addition to the references given under note #1, p.302, this covenant was mentioned by Hunton, P., A Treatise of Monarchie, p.4; Prynne, Lord Bishops None of the Lords Bishops; Prynne, A Soveraigne Antidote, pp.4-5; Master Pimmes speech to the Lords in Parliament, April 12,1641, p.12.

[4] Ames, Cases of Conscience, p.164.

The king is subject to two covenants which set bounds to his power both from above and below. He has an obligation to perform both to God and to the people. He is answerable not only to God but to those whom he rules. These Puritans deny the existence of any precept or example from God's Word which would warrant the unbounded authority of the king.

Another implication of the covenant between king and people is its recognition of certain rights and privileges in the people. The people are not mere subjects to be ruled by arbitrary power. They are inferiors, but at the same time they have sufficient power in themselves to enter into an agreement and to define by contract the nature of the rule to which they are subjected. By the covenant the people participate in the conferring of power upon their rulers. Kings do not have their powers solely by divine ordination but also from the people. Laws by which the king rules are not dictated by his own absolute will but with the consent of Parliament.[1] Consequently the inferior relation of the people to the king is somewhat modified. To some extent the idea of covenant qualified the inequalities in an hierarchical social order.

Here the implications of the covenant are revolutionary. It, at least theoretically, gave the people a voice in choosing their governors and a basis for political resistance. The covenant enlarged the liberties and scope of action of the people at the same time it circumscribed the authority of the ruler. Thus, when publicly the Puritan advocates of the covenant were assuring the king of their absolute loyalty, actually they were, by implication, laying the foundation of a political philosophy which undercut and limited his supremacy. The political covenant opened the way not only for the theory that the people had a voice in determining who should exercise authority over them, but it also assumed that the people had a continuing responsibility in the government of the political realm.

---

[1] An Humble Remonstrance to His Maiesty, Against the Tax of Ship-Money Imposed. p.13.

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in the preceeding pages indicates that the idea of covenant was a fairly well developed doctrine in England prior to the civil war period. It was no mere phrase, but a concept explored by a group of Puritans in reference to theology, ethics, history, sociology, and politics. In each of these areas it offered an interpretation and made a significant contribution to the history of ideas. Moreover, it appears to have been a rather harmoniously accepted idea. ? It did not, at least within this early Puritan period, become a center of controversy. While its zealous advocates affirmed the root of the concept in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, they found confirmation of it through all history. For them the idea of covenant was no innovation but a recognition of the way in which God has dealt with men from the beginning.

Primarily the covenant described the relation of God and man. But beyond this it was applied to most human relations, except those which were based upon nature or force. As a consequence, covenant theology was interested in God as a Ruler or God as Redeemer, but it neglected God as Creator. Just as there can be no covenant covenant describing the natural relationship between father and son, so these Puritans did not affirm any between the Creator and his creatures. But God as King and God as Saviour does covenant with men, because government and salvation involve voluntary and not necessary relationships. Just here lies the essence of the idea of covenant. It pertained to those relationships which could be characterized by some degree of freedom.

In at least three significant ways the covenant idea influenced the development of new ways of thinking about society and about God and man: it emphasized the voluntary nature of personal relationships and of government; it set limits upon authority; and it re-enforced a sense of personal responsibility. Each of these points bears amplification.

In essence the covenant implied that before a government can be established -- in the home, in the church, in the commonwealth, in the kingdom of God -- and before people can be expected to yield obedience to that government, the consent of the governed must be secured. Government is admittedly necessary, but at the same time it calls for the consent of those under it. God establishes authority, but the people confer it. Therefore, before a king exercises authority, he promises in a covenant with the people to rule justly, and the people in turn become his subjects under that condition. Before a wife is bound to the government of the family she consents by a covenant to abide in that relationship. Before God's covenant becomes binding a man must take hold of it and accept it. Consent is the condition upon which government and obligations rest.

Despite the supremacy of God and despite the superiority of the king, according to covenant Puritans, government is not exercised in an arbitrary or dictatorial manner but by consent. God the Supreme Ruler does not impose his ways arbitrarily upon man, nor does he rule by decree and fiat. Far from being an autocrat or tyrant, God deals with men reasonably by covenant which requires the acquiescence of both parties. The covenant idea recognizes the will of each party and gives each its due, without the one over-ruling the other by force. Voluntarism characterizes all societies in which men's lives are ordered. The result is that government is conceived as a shared responsibility in which all participate.

Secondly, growing out of the recognition of consent as the basis of all relationships, is another assumption that a certain equality exists between parties to a covenant. This has special relevance to relations among men. Covenant preachers took the existing pattern of social relations with superiors and inferiors in each society and without directly attacking those inequalities superimposed the idea of covenant. Within a framework of inequality the covenant stressed mutuality and the freedom to enter relationships. The net effect was to mitigate the inequalities and to curb dominant authority.

This was done in two chief ways. First, it was accomplished by re-enforcing the third dimension in human relations, and secondly, by placing bounds upon authority. In regard to the first, there was the clear emphasis that covenants are not merely between men, but that God is also a party to them. Whether a man in a particular social relationship be inferior or superior in social status, before God he is an equal. God differentiates among men not in the way society does, but only whether or not they have grace which yields faith and obedience. In relation to God it makes no difference whether a man occupy a high or low place in human affairs. Consequently, though in the covenant between husband and wife the superiority of the husband is assumed, yet in the covenant which the wife makes with God she is her husband's equal. Thus, the relation of husband and wife is marked by an inequality which is qualified by equality. The same holds true in other covenants which men make among themselves. Secondly, the covenant idea modifies inequalities by limiting the power of superiors. That there are superiors and inferiors in society is considered perfectly proper, but that the authority of superiors is natural is denied. Authority is not merely a divine gift or inherited; it rests upon consent..The idea of covenant did not permit the assumption of absolute power. A king is no absolute ruler governing as he wishes and exercising his rule without reference to his subjects. His authority rests upon a covenant relation, so that he is partly dependent upon the people for the maintenance of his authority. Nor is God an arbitrary deity who runs rough-shod over man and forces him against his will. God deals by covenant and so looks for man's acceptance of his covenant. Certainly equality does not exist between a sovereign God and a corrupt man. But the use of covenant between God and man leads to conceiving of God not so much in terms of an infinite and absolute sovereign but as a chief being among those with whom he seeks to be related. God in covenant seeks the cooperation and partnership of man. All in all the covenant offers greater assurance and comfort to the party in the inferior position simply because it sets bounds to the authority of superiors and gives recognition to the rights of inferiors in relation to to their superiors.

The application of the covenant to various relations may be interpreted as a serious attempt to solve the question of inequality. But in this these Puritans were only partly successful, and their success was more implicit than explicit. The covenant did infer that inequalities within society are not based upon natural right nor are they divinely determined. Unequals can covenant and enter into relationships, which means that inequality is not fixed but voluntary and in a sense fluid. But these men failed to develop fully the possibilities which the covenant idea contained in terms of society. Certainly implicit in the idea of covenant is the moderating of superiority and the setting of reasonable bounds to power.

Thirdly, covenant thinking fostered a strong sense of responsibility growing out of the reciprocal duties of covenants. J. W. Allen asserts that seventeenth century thought in England "was more concerned with the idea of duty than anything else whatever."[1] Judged by the vast amount of space devoted to treatises on the duties of men, this conclusion appears reasonable. Covenant thinking was concerned with the obligations of persons who covenant with one another, but its chief significance lay in affirming that duty is not arbitrarily imposed by a superior but voluntarily assumed. Once a man enters a covenant he takes upon himself serious responsibilities to God and to his fellow men. Once he has consented to covenant a man can no longer live as he wishes, but must live as the covenant demands. The believer engaging in the covenant of grace is obligated to a life of obedience to God's law as revealed in Scripture; subjects in covenant with their king must abide by the laws of the realm; in the covenant of marriage both parties are bound to perform the requisite duties pertaining to the family. Only through the willing acceptance and performance of the duties involved in each of his relationships to others does a man live to God and advance his glory. The life in covenant is a life of high ethical duties, which a man takes personal responsibility to perform.

---

[1] Allen, J.W., English Political Thought (1938) p.304.

That the idea of covenant raises difficulties as well as offers provocative answers in interpreting man's relationships is also obvious. The idea of an agreement made between two parties under certain conditions is readily applicable in most human situations,but strictly speaking a covenant which stresses mutuality and assumes joint acquiescence, is not possible between God and man. And yet these English Puritans persisted in describing divine-human relations in covenant terms, so that they were forced to modify both the idea of covenant and theological doctrine.

God's covenant is not strictly mutual, except that it does bind both parties to it: God obligating himself to fulfill his promises, and man to obey God's moral law. But in God's covenant there is no mutuality in the establishment of the covenant: one party accepts the terms which the other party imposes. Nor is there a sharing in the benefits of the covenant: God receives no benefits, so the covenant is all for man's happiness and comfort. Properly speaking, according to the accepted definition of a covenant, the covenant of grace is not a covenant.

Nor in God's covenant is there joint acquiescence. All is dependent upon grace: both God's part and man's is of grace. It is God who both initiates the covenant and enables man to enter into it. Men may be encouraged to think that some choice or some action on their part assures them of God's favor, but since God is indebted to no one, he gives his grace to whomsoever he will. Yet sometimes these covenant writers so stress human activity that they give the impression that man covenants on his own. But in the last analysis man's hope lies only in

God. Man's action is subsequent to God's; men are good only in so far as God first works in them. By emphasizing the importance of man's will and his freedom to enter into covenant relations English covenant Puritans hoped to resolve the paradox of God doing all and yet man being a responsible creature. Actually, however, the idea of covenant hardly did more than re-phrase this problem and put it in a new framework. Man does assent to the covenant, but only through God's enabling him. Men are led to believe that the covenant is not really joined without their consent, but really all is dependent upon God. In fact, it is just because the covenant is not strictly speaking conditional but absolute that it is such a comfortable doctrine. That God has chosen to covenant with man is a guarantee that he will be faithful to make good what he has promised. Looked at one way the covenant is totally God's work, but from another angle it cannot be effected until man's will acknowledges and covenants by God's grace.

The covenant idea not only had relevance for the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, but its implications carried forward into the future. Whatever other aspects might be mentioned, the idea of covenant significantly affected religious thought, the concept of society, and political philosophy. The value of the concept is heightened by the ability now to see in retrospect the direction in which the basic assumptions of the doctrine were applied and developed in ensuing years.

1. Covenant Christianity with its strong emphasis upon the personal relationship of the believer to God resulted in an interpretation of religion closely akin to pietism, which was to mature as a rel-

igious movement in the next century. Covenant theology was in a way an early expression toward pietism, for it underscored those aspects of religion which pietism held central. The religion of the covenant was highly personal and highly voluntaristic. Reason does not play a decisive part in covenant theology; it is not by understanding but by action that the religious life is advanced. Covenant religion centered upon a direct relationship between God and man; it was concerned with personal salvation (though it always set salvation in a framework of ethical obligations, its tendency was to turn man inward); it placed special emphasis upon the will and gave the will an important role in faith. The spiritual life was made primary, though it was a life of action. There is an interest in cleansing and reforming the corporate life and relating it to God, but by and large seventeenth century English covenant writers were more concerned about the redemption of the individual than of society. The covenant was an instrument of reform, but chiefly it was a means of quickening vital religious living.

Covenant religion was introspective in tendency. Men are urged to look not to God's decrees nor to his sacraments to find confirmation of his grace, but to the covenant, which is made with the inner man. A man must examine his heart to learn what manner of person he is. It is the heart which God persuades to be subject to him, and it is to the heart that men must look to see what God intends towards them. Covenant Puritanism was marked throughout by an emphasis upon practical religious living, and yet there was this strong introspective concern for assurance of salvation.

2. In terms of society the idea of covenant augments those forces breaking away from society as status towards the idea of society

made up of persons in voluntary relations. Externally the framework of society remains unchanged; it is still composed of an order based upon superiority and inferiority. But this order is now described in terms of covenant. This means at least two things. It implies that the role a person occupies in society is not completely to be taken for granted, but is a matter which he himself has a part in determining. Vocation is still God-given, but it involves man's consent. Secondly, the application of covenant to society implies that people are bound together under God by mutual agreement to undertake certain duties. All personal relationships involve responsibilities. The result is that though society still has inequalities, those inequalities are willingly accepted and are not imposed or based upon nature. There is some room for social mobility, for reciprocity, and for mutual give and take in covenant society with its affirmation of man's freedom to enter covenant relations. These implications of freedom are lacking in a hereditary or static society. Society, according to covenant thinking, is not arbitrary or mechanical, but men are free to assume personal obligations through voluntary relations with others.

3. Politically the implications of the idea of covenant led in the direction of constitutional government. It emphasized the consent of the governed as an essential factor in all government. Government is never by edict, but by mutual consent with the governors held responsible to God and to their subjects. With the covenant setting bounds to authority, political power was not irresponsible or dictatorial. The governed had certain privileges which could not be ignored. Without doubt covenant thinking was related to the theory of social contract, but in the period under consideration, its implications for government

were much more important. Politically the idea of covenant led to the affirmation of shared responsibilities with the governor and the governed mutually dependent through a covenant in which both participate. The covenant implied a division of powers and privileges, which resulted in government by a chosen ruler on behalf of and for the welfare of the people. The political covenant advanced limited monarchy.

One major significance of covenant thinking runs all through this discussion. It is the affirmation of a kind of freedom. This is no freedom by which a man determines his destiny; nor is it a freedom to live as he wishes. But the freedom of the covenant is the freedom to enter into covenant relations with others. Within the given orders of society the covenant introduces and gives recognition to the notion of consent. The idea of covenant enables man to feel that he is not simply a pawn in a pre-determined environment, but a person whose willing activity has importance. Covenant describes many life situations so that there is a freedom of action which permeates all life, including one's relation to God. Furthermore, every man in some respect is in covenant, so that this freedom is exercised by all. Covenant theory gives man a voice in the direction of the common everyday relationships of life. In making this basic affirmation the idea of covenant turned its back upon a feudal conception of society and pointed in the direction of an order in which freedom and responsibility are the recognized privileges of every man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

ADAMS, Thomas — *The Works of Thomas Adams*, Angus, Joseph, ed. 3 vol. Edinburgh, James Nichol. 1862.

AINSWORTH, Henry — *An Animadversion to Mr. Richard Clyftons Advertisement*, who under pretence of answering Chr. Lawnes book, hath published an other mans private Letter, with Mr. Francis Johnsons answer thereto... Amsterdam. 1613.

--- *The Communion of Saints*. A treatise of the fellowship that the Faithful have with God and his Angels, and one with another: in this present life. (Amsterdam) Reprinted 1615.

--- *Covnterpoyson*. Consideration touching the poynts in difference between the godly minister and people of the Church of England and the seduced brethren of the Separation... (Amsterdam) 1608.

--- *A Defence of the Holy Scriptures, Worship, and Ministerie used in the Christian Churches separated from Antichrist* Against the challenges, cavils, and contradiction of M. Smyth in his book intituled The difference of the Churches of the Separation... Amsterdam. 1609.

--- *The Orthodox Foundation of Religion*. Long since Collected by that Iudicious and Elegant man Mr. Henry Ainsworth, for the benefit of his private company....By. S.W. London, 1641.

--- *A Seasonable Discourse*, or A Censure upon a Dialogue of the Anabaptists Intituled, A Description of what God hath Predestinated concerning Man. Is tryed and examined. London. 1644 (first ed. 1623)

ALISON, R. — *A Plaine Confvtation of a Treatise of Brownisme*, Published by some of that Faction, Entituled, A Description of the visible Church... London. 1590.

AMES, William — *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in Gods Worship*, or A Triplication with D. Bvrgesse His Rejoinder For D. Morton. (Rotterdam) 1633.

--- *A Manvdvction for Mr. Robinson and such as consent with him in privat communion*... Dort. 1614.

--- *A Reply to Dr. Mortons Generall Defence of Three Nocent Ceremonies*... viz. The surplice, Crosse in Baptisme, and kneeling at the receiving of the sacramentall elements of Bread and Wine. (Amsterdam) 1622.

--- *A Second Manvdvction for Mr. Robinson*. Or a confirmation of the former, in an ansvver to his manumission. 1615.

--- *Workes*. Translated out of Latine for publike Vse. *Conscience with the Powers and Cases Thereof; The Marrow of Sacred Divinity; An Analyticall Exposition of both the Epistles of Peter*. London. 1643.

ARMINIUS, James *Works*. 3 vol. Edinburgh, James Nichol. 1853.

BALL, John *An Answer to Two Treatises of Mr. Iohn Can*, the Leader of the English Brownists in Amsterdam... London. 1642.

--- *A Friendly Triall of Grounds Tending to Separation*... (London) 1640.

--- *A Short Treatise*. Contayning all the Principall Grounds of Christian Religion...The eleventh impression. London. 1637.

--- *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*. Wherein The graduall breakings out of Gospel-grace from Adam to Christ are clearly discovered, the difference betwixt the old and new Testament are laid open, divers errours of Arminians and others are confuted; the nature of Uprightnesse and the way of Christ in bringing the soul into Communion with himself: Together with many other Parts, both doctrinally and practically profitable are solidly handled... London. 1645.

--- *A Treatise of Faith*. Divided into two Parts: The first shewing the Nature, The second, the Life of Faith. Both tending to direct the weake Christian how he may posesse the whole Word of God as his owne, overcome temptations, better his obedience, and live comfortably in all estates. London. 1637.

--- *A Tryall of the New-Church Way in New England and in Old*. London. 1644.

BALL, William *A Caveat for Svbjects*. London. 1642.

BANCROFT, Richard *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline*. London. 1593.

BARROW, Henry *A Brief Discoverie of the False Chvrch*. (?) 1590.

--- *M^{r} Henry Barrowes Platform*. (?) 1593.

--- *A Plaine Refvtation of M. Giffards Booke*, intituled, A short treatise gainst the Donatists of England... (?) 1591.

--- *A True Description Out of the Word of God of the visible Church*. (?) 1589.

BARTLETT, W. *A Model of the Primitive Congregational Way*, or A Treatise Concerning Church-Government, occasioned by the Distractions of these times. London. 1647.

BASTWICK, John *Independency not Gods Ordinance*. London. 1645.

BAYLEY, Lewis *The Practice of Pietie*: directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God.. Delf. 1635.

BAYNES, Paul *Briefe Directions unto a Godly Life*... London. 1637.

--- *Christian Letters of Mr. Pavl Bayne*. London. 1628.

--- *The Diocesans Tryall*. Wherein All the Sinnewes of Doctor Dovvnhams Defence are brought into three heads, and orderly dissolved...Published by Dr. William Ames... (London) 1621.

--- *A Trial of A Christians Estate*, or A Discoverie of the Causes, degrees, signes, and differences of the Apostasie both of true Christians and false... London. 1618.

BELLAMIE, John	*A Iustification of the City Remonstrance*.. London. 1646.
---	*A Vindication of the London Remonstrance*.. London. 1646.
BERNARD, Richard	*Christian Advertisements and Counsels of Peace.* Also disswasions from the Separatists schisme, commonly called Brownisme... London. 1608.
---	*The Faithfull Shepherd*... London. 1621.
---	*Looke beyond Luther*., or An Answer to that Question so often and so insultingly purposed by our Aduersaries, asking vs, where this our Religion was before Luther's time... London. 1623.
---	*A Short View of the Praelaticall Church of England* wherein is set forth the horrible abuses in Discipline and Gouernment, layd open in ten Sections... (?) 1641.
BEZA, Theodore	*A Booke of Christian Questions and Answers*... Golding, Arthur, *trans*. London. 1586.
BILSON, Thomas	*The Perpetual Governement of Christes Chvrch*. London. 1593.
---	*The Trve Difference Betweene Christian Svbiection and Vnchristian Rebellion*... London. 1586.
BLAKE, Thomas	*The Birth-Priviledge, Or Covenant Holinesse of Beleevers and their Issue in the time of the Gospel*. Together With the Right of Infants to Baptisme. London. 1644.
BOND, John	*A Doore of Hope*. Also Holy and Loyal Activity... London. 1641.
(BRADSHAW, Wm.)	*English Pvritanisme*. Containing The Maine Opinions of the rigidest sort of those that are called Puritanes in the Realme of England. (?) 1640.
---	*A Treatise of Divine Worship*. (?) 1604.
---	*The Vnreasonablenesse of the Separation*. Made apparant by an examination of Mr. Iohnsons pretended reasons... Dort. 1614.
BREDWELL, Stephen	*A Detection of Edward Glavers Heretical Confection*, etc. With An Admonition to the followers of Glever and Browne. London. 1586.
---	*The Rasing of the Foundations of Brownisme*... London 1588.
BRINSLEY, John	*The Saints Solemne Covenant with Their God*... London. 1644.
--- (elder)	*The True Watch and Rule of Life*. The fifth edition. London. 1611.
BROWNE, Robert	*An ansvvere to Master Cartvvright* his letter for ioyning with the English Churches. London. 1583/4?.
---	*A Booke Which Sheweth the Life and Manner of all true Christians*... Middelburgh. 1582.
---	*Reformation Without Tarrying For Any*. A treatise of Reformation without tarrying for anie and of the wickednesse of those Preachers which will not reforme till the Magistrate commaunde or compel them. (Middelburgh, 1582) Boston, Old South Leaflets, 1899.

--- *The "Retraction" of Robert Browne, Father of Congregationalism*. Being "A Reproofe of Certaine Schismatical Persons (i.e. Henry Barrowe, Hohn Greenwood, and their Congregation) and their Doctrine touching the Hearing and Preaching of the Word of God. Burrage, C., *ed*. Oxford, The University Press. 1907.

--- *A True and Short Declaration*. Both of the Gathering and Ioyning Together of Certain Persons, and also of the Lamentable Breach and Division which fell amongst them. (?) (1584?)

BROUGHTON, Hugh *An Advertisement of Corrvption in ovr Handling of Religion*. To the Kinges Majesty. (Amsterdam) 1605.

BULKELEY, Peter *The Gospel-Covenant*; or The Covenant of Grace Opened... London. 1646.

BULLINGER, Henry *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*. Trans. by H.I. Ed. for Parker Society by Thomas Harding. Cambridge, The University Press. 1849-52. 4 vols.

--- *The Old Faith in Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale* (Parker Society) Cambridge, The University Press, 1844.

BURROUGHS, J. *Gospel Conversation*. Wherein is shewed How the Conversation of Believers must be above what could be by the Light of Nature, beyond those that lived under the Law, and suitable to what truths the Gospel holds forth. London. 1648.

--- *Sions Joy*. A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons...September 7, 1641. London. 1641.

BURTON, Henry *An Apology of an Appeale*. (London?) 1636.

--- *The Christians Bulwarke Against Satans Battery*. Or, The Doctrine of Iustification... London. 1632.

--- *Conformities Deformity*. In a Dialogue between Conformity and Conscience. London. 1646.

--- *Englands Bondage and Hope of Deliverance*. London. 1641.

--- *A Plea to An Appeale*. Trauersed Dialogue wise. London. 1626.

--- *A Vindication of Churches commonly called Independent*. London. 1644.

--- *Vindiciae veritatis*. Truth vindicated against Calumny In a Briefe Answer to Dr. Bastwicks two late books entituled, Independency not Gods Ordinance, with the second Part, styled, The Postscript. London. 1645.

BYFIELD, N. *The Rvle of Faith*. Or, An Exposition of the Apostles Creed... London. 1626.

CALAMY, Edmund *The Noble-Mans Patterne Of true and real Thankfulnesse*. A Sermon Preached before the Right Honourable House of Lords, June 15,1643... London. 1643.

CALVIN, John *Foure Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin*... Fielde, Iohn, *trans*. London. 1579.

--- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Beveridge, Henry, *trans*. 3 vols. Edinburgh. 1845.

--- *Thirteene Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluine*. Entrating on the Free Election of God in Iacob... Fielde, Iohn, *trans*. London. 1579.

--- *Tracts*. Beveridge, Henry, *trans*. 3 vols. Edinburgh. 1849.

--- *Two and Twentie Sermons of Master Iohn Caluin*. In which Sermons is most religiously handled, the hundreth and nineteenth Psalme of Dauid.. T. S. *trans*. London. 1580.

CANNE, John *A Necessity of Separation from the Church of England Proved by the Nonconformists' Principles*. Stoval, Charles, ed. London. 1849. (first printed in Amsterdam 1634)

--- *The Snare is Broken*. Wherein is Proved by Scripture, Law, and Reason, that the Nationall Covenant and Oath was unlawfully given and taken... London. 1649.

--- *A Stay against Straying*. Or, An Answer to a Treatise intituled, The Lavvfulnes of hearing the Ministers of the Church of England. By John Robinson. Wherein is proved the contrarie, viz: The vnlawfulnes of hearing the Ministers of all false Churches. 1639.

CARTWRIGHT, Thomas *An Ansvvere vnto a Letter of Master Harrisons by Master Cartwright being at Middelborough*. Mss. copy by H.M. Dexter. 1871.

--- *A Reply to An Answere made of M. Doctor Whitegifte Againste the Admonition to the Parliament.* (1573)

--- *The Second Reply against Maister Doctor Whitegiftes second answer, touching the Churche Disciplina*. (Zurich?) 1575.

--- *A Treatise of Christian Religion*. or, *The Whole Bodie and substance of Divinitie*. London. 1616.

CASE, Thomas *Gods Waiting to be Gracious vnto His People*. Together with Englands Encouragements and Cautions to wait on God. London. 1642.

CHADERTON, Laurence *A Fruitfull Sermon* upon the 3,4,5,6,7 & 8 verses of the 12 chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. (Leyden?) (1618?)

CHARLES I *A Declaration of the True Cavses which moued His Majestie to assemble and after inforced Him to dissolue*...Parliament. 1626.

--- *His Maiesties Answer to a Printed Book Intituled A Remonstrance or Declaration of the Lords and Commons now assembled in Parliament 20 May 1642*. York. 1642.

CLYFTON, Richard *An Advertisement* concerning a book lately published by Christopher Lawne and others against the English exiled Church at Amsterdam. 1612 (Mss. extracts by H.M.Dexter)

--- *A Plea for Infants and Elder People concerning their Baptisme*... Amsterdam. 1610.

COTTON, John *Christ the Fountaine of Life*... London. 1641.

--- *The Covenant of Grace*. Discovering the Great Work *of a Sinners Reconciliation to God*. London. 1655.

--- The Covenant of Gods Free Grace Most sweetly unfolded, and comfortably applied to a disquieted Soul... London. 1645.

--- The Doctrine of the Church to which is committed the Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven.. London.1642

--- Gods Mercie Mixed with his Iustice... London.1641.

--- The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven and Power Thereof according to the word of God. London. 1644.

--- A Letter of Mr. John Cotton, Teacher of the Church in Boston in New-England to Mr. Williams, a Preacher there... London. 1643.

--- The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared. London. 1648.

--- The Way of Life or God's Way and Course in Bringing the Soule into, keeping it in, and carrying it on, in the images of life and peace. London. 1641.

CRANMER, Thomas — Writings of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Cranmer. London, Religious Tract Society. (1830?)

CRISP, Tobias — Christ Alone Exalted. In fourteene Sermons preached in, and neare London... 2 vols. London. 1643.

CULVERWELL, Ezekiel — A Treatise of Faith... London. 1623.

DAVENPORT, John — A Iust Complaint against an vniust doer... (Amsterdam?) 1634.

--- The Profession of the Faith of that Reverend and Worthy Divine Mr. J.D... London. 1642.

DIGGES, Dudley — The Vnlawfulnesse of Subjects taking vp Armes against their Soveraigne in what case soever. 1643.

DOD, John — A Plaine and Familar Exposition of the Ten Commandements... London. 1609.

--- A Plaine and Familar Exposition of the Lords Prayer ... London. 1635.

--- Seven Godlie and Fruitfvll Sermons. The Six First Preached by Master Iohn Dod: the last by Robert Cleaver... London. 1614.

--- Ten Sermons tending chiefely to the fitting of men for the worthy receiuing of the Lords Supper... The sixe first by I. Dod. The foure last, by R. Cleaver... London. 1621.

DOWNAME, George — An Abstract of the Duties Commanded and Sinnes Forbidden in the Law of God... London. 1635.

--- Christian Warfare against the deuill, world, and flesh... 4th ed. London. 1634 (first pub. 1604)

--- The Covenant of Grace. Dublin. 1631.

--- The Second Part of the Christian Warfare; or the Contempt of the World... London. 1619.

DYKE, Daniel — The Second and Last Part of the VVorkes of the late faithfull Servant of God Daniel Dyke, Batchelour of Divinity. Viz: Sixe Evangelicall Histories. A Commentary upon the Epistle to Philemon. The Schoole of Affliction. Published since his death, by his Brother, Ier. Dyke...The second Edition. London. 1633.

--- The Mystery of Self-Deceiving. The fift edition. London. 1617.

--- Tvvo Treatises. The One, of Repentance, the other, Of Christs Temptations... London. 1631.

(FENNER, Dudley) A Parte of a Register, contayninge sundrie memorable matters, written by diuers godly and learned in our time, which stande for, and desire the reformation of our Church, in Discipline and Ceremonies, accordinge to the pure worde of God, and the Lawe of our Lande. Edinburgh. 1593.

FERNE, Henry The Resolving of Conscience. Cambridge. 1642.

FIENNES, N. A Speech of the Honourable Nathaniel Fiennes...in answer to the Third Speech of the Lord George Digby. Concerning Bishops and the City of London Petition... 1641.

--- A Second Speech of the Honourable Nathaniel Fiennes ...Touching the Subjects Liberty against the late Canons and the New Oath. (London?) 1641.

FORBES, John A Treatise Tending to Cleare the Doctrine of Justification.. Middelburgh. 1616.

FOTHERBY, John The Covenant Betweene God and Man. Playnely declared in laying open the chiefest points of Christian Religion. London. 1616.

(FULKE, William) A Briefe and Plaine Declaration concerning the desires of all those faithfull Ministers that have and do seek for the Discipline and Reformation of the Church of England. London. 1584.

GATAKER, Thomas Certaine Sermons... London. 1637.

--- Gods Parley with Princes with an appeal from Them to Him. London. 1620.

--- A Marriage Praier, Or Succinct Meditations... London. 1624.

--- Marriage Dvties Briefly Covched Together... London. 1637.

--- A Good Wife Gods Gift, And a Wife Indeed. Two Marriage Sermons. London. 1637.

--- The Ioy of the Iust with the Signes of Such. A discourse Tending to the Comfort of the Defected and Afflicted... London. 1637.

GENT, J.S. Malignancy Un-Masked. London. 1642.

GEREE, John The Character of an old English Puritane or Nonconformist. London. 1646.

--- Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae or The Cases Resolved which Discover that though there bee need of Reformation in, yet not Separation from, the Churches of Christ in England. London. 1644.

GIFFORD, George A Short Treatise against the Donatists of England whome we call Brownists. London. 1590.

GOODWIN, John Innocencies Triumph, or An Answer to the Back-part of a Discourse lately published by William Prynne, Esquire, intituled, A full Reply... London. 1644.

--- A Quaere concerning the Church-Covenant, practised in the Separate Congregations. London. 1643.

GOODWIN, Thomas *The Works of Thomas Goodwin.* 12 vols. Edinburgh, 1861.

GOUGE, William *The Workes of William Govge.* In tvvo volumes.
V.I Of Domesticall Dvties. (2nd. ed. London. 1626.)
V.II. The whole Armour of God.(4th ed. London,1627.)
... London. 1627.

GREENHAM, Richard *The Workes of the Reverend and Faithfvll Servant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God*, collected into one volume.. By. H.H...The Fift Edition. London. 1612.

HARLEIAN MISCELLANY, The. A Collection of Scarce, Curious, and entertaining Pamphlets and Tracts, as well in manuscript as in print. Selected from the Library of Edward Harley... 10 vols. London. 1808-1813.

HARRIS, Robert *A Treatise of the Nevv Couenant.* London. 1632.

--- *The Way to Trve Happinesse*... London. 1632.

--- *The Works of Robert Harris.* London. 1654.

HARRISON, Richard *A Little Treatise vpon the first verse of the 122 Psalme*... 1618.

HENDERSON,Alexander *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons* ...December 27, 1643... London. 1644.

HERLE, C. *A Fuller Answer to a Treatise Written by Doctor Ferne.* London. 1642.

HIERON, Samuel *The Dignitie of Preaching*... London. 1615.

HILDERSAM, Arthur *The Doctrine of Communicating worthily in the Lords Supper*... London. 1619.

--- *The Doctrine of Fasting and Praier and Humiliation for Sinne*...delivered in the yeare 1625... London. 1633.

HOOKER, Richard *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.* Books I-IV. London, Glasgow, G. Rutledge & Sons. 1888.

HOOKER, Thomas *The Covenant of Grace Opened.* Wherein These particular are handled: viz. 1. What the Covenant of Grace is, 2. What the Seales of the Covenant are, 3. Who are the Parties and Subjects fit to receive these Seales. From all which Particulars Infants Baptisme is fully Proved and vindicated... London. 1649.

--- *The Faithful Covenanter.* A Sermon Preached at the Lectvre in Dedham in Essex... London. 1644.

--- *The Sovles Exaltation.* A Treatise contayning The Soules Vnion with Christ on I Cor. 6:17. The Soules Benefit from Vnion with Christ on I Cor. 1:30. The Soules Justification on 2 Cor. 5:21... London.1638.

--- *The Sovles Preparation for Christ.* Or, A Treatise of *Contrition*... London. 1634.

--- *The Sovles Vocation for Effectval Calling to Christ.* London. 1638.

HUNTON, Philip *A Treatise of Monarchie*, containing two parts. 1. Concerning Monarchy in Generall. 2. Concerning this Particular Monarchy. London. 1643.

JACOB, Henry	An Attestation of many Learned, Godly, and Famous Divines, Lightes of Religion, and pillars of the Gospel, iustifying this doctrine, viz. That the Church governement ought to be alwayes with the peoples free consent... (Geneva?) 1613.
---	A Christian and Modest Offer of a Most Indifferent Conference, or Disputation, About the maine and principall Controversies betwixt the Prelates, and the late silenced and deprived Ministers in England... (?) 1606.
---	A Declaration and Plainer Opening of Certain Points, with A Sound Confirmation of Some other Contained in a Treatise Intituled, The Divine Beginning and institution of Christes true visible and ministeriall Church... 1612.
---	A Defence of the Churches and Ministery of Englande. Written in two Treatises, against the Reasons and Obiections of Maister Francis Johnson, and others of the separation commonly called Brownists... Middelburgh. 1599.
---	The Divine Beginning and Institution of Christs True Visible or Ministeriall Church. Also The Vnchangeableness of the same by men: viz. in the forme and essentiall constitution thereof... Leyden. 1610.
---	Reasons Taken Ovt of Gods Word and the Best Hvmane Testimonies Proving a Necessitie of Reforming Ovr Chvrches In England... (?) 1604.
JAMES I	The True Lawe of Free Monarchies. London. 1603.
JOHNSON, Francis	An Answer To Maister H. Iacob His Defence of the Churches and Ministery of England. (Middelburg?) 1600.
---	An Apologie or Defence of Such True Christians as are commonly (but vniustly) called Brownists. (Amsterdam?) 1604.
---	Certayne Reasons and Arguments Proving that it is not lawfull to heare or haue any spirituall communion with the present Ministerie of the Church of England. (Amsterdam?) 1608.
---	A Christian Plea... (Amsterdam?) 1617.
---	A Short Treatise Concerning the exposition of those words of Christ, Tell the Church &c... (Amsterdam?) 1611.
---	A Treatise of the Ministery of the Church of England. Wherein is handled this question, Whether it is to be separated from, or ioyned unto... (?) (1595)
KNOX, John	Writings of the Rev. John Knox, Minister of God's Word in Scotland. London, Religious Tract Society. (1830?)
LAWNE, Christopher	Brovvnisme Tvrned The In-side out-ward. Being a Parallel Betweene the Profession and Practise of the Brownists Religion... London. 1613.
---	The Profane Schisme of the Brownists or Separatists ... (London) 1612.

LEIGH, Edward	A Treatise of the Divine Promises... London. 1633.
---	A Treatise of Divinity Consisting of Three Books... the Scripture..God..the principall Workes of God.. London. 1647.
LIGHTFOOTE, John	Elias Redivivus: A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons...March 29,1643.. London. 1643.
LUTHER, Martin	Works of Martin Luther. 6 vols. Philadelphia, A.J. Holman Co. 1915-32.
MARSHALL, Stephen	A Peace-Offering to God. A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons..September 7, 1641... London. 1641.
---	The Song of Moses The Servant of God, and The Song of the Lambe..a Sermon preached to the House of Commons..Iune 15,1643... London. 1643.
(MATHER, Richard)	Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discvssed. In an Answer of the Elders of the severall Churches in New England To two and thirty Questions, sent over to them by divers Ministers in England, to declare their judgments therein. Together with an Apologie of the said Elders in New-England for Church-Covenant, sent over in Answer to Master Bernard in the yeare 1639.... London. 1643.
MILTON, John	Of Reformation touching Church-discipline in England. And the Cavvses that hitherto have hindred it... (London) 1641.
---	The Reformation of Christian Religion by Josiah. Being a commendable Example for all Princes, professing the Gospell, to follow. With a warning to all faithfull and true hearted Subjects to encourage their Princes in so happy a course. (?) 1641.
MOCKET, T.	A View of the Solemn League and Covenant, for Reformation, defence of Religion, the Honour and Happynesse of the King, and the Peace, Safety, and Union of the three Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to be taken by all sorts, in all the said Kingdoms... London. 1644.
MORTON, Thomas	A Defence of the Innocencie of the Three Ceremonies of the Church of England. viz: The Surplice, Crosse after Baptisme, and Kneeling at the receiuing of the blessed Sacrament. The second impression. London. 1619.
---	Salomon, or A Treatise declaring the state of the kingdome of Israel, as it was in the daies of Salomon... London. 1596.
MURTON, John	A Description of what God hath Predestinated Concerning Man, in his Creation, Transgression, & Regeneration.. (?) 1620.
NYE, Philip	The Excellency and Lawfulnesse of the Solemn League and Covenant... London. 1646.
ORMEROD, Oliver	The Picture of a Puritane... London. 1605.

OWEN, David	*Herod and Pilate Reconciled*, etc. or, The Concord of Papist and Puritan for the coercion, deposition, and killing of Kings. London. 1610.
PAGET, John	*An Arrow Against the Separation of the Brownists.* .. Amsterdam. 1618.
PALMER, Henry	*The Necessity and Encouragement of Utmost Venturing for the Churches Help...* London. 1643.
PARKER, Henry	*The Case of Shipmony* briefly discoursed According to the Grounds of Law, Policy, and Conscience. (?) 1640.
---	*Observations Upon Some of His Majesties Late Answers & Expresses...* 1642. (re-printed in Haller, Wm., ed., *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, New York, 1934)
PENRY, John	*A Briefe Discovery of the Vntruths and Slanders* (against the trve gouernement of the Church of Christ) contained in a Sermon preached the 8. of Februarie 1588 by D. Bancroft... (?)
---	*A Defence of that which hath bin written in the questions of the ignorant ministerie and the communicating with them.* (Mouldsey?) (1588?)
---	*An Exhortation vnto the gouernours and people of his Maiesties countrie of Wales* to labour earnestly, to have the preaching of the Gospell planted among them. (Louldsey) 1588.
---	*The Historie of Corah, Dathan, and Abirim*, &c.. 1609.
---	*A Treatise Wherein is Manifestlie Proved that Reformation and those that sincerely fauor the same, are vnjustly charged to be enemies vnto hir Maiestie, and the state.* (Edinburgh?) 1590.
PERKINS, William	*The Workes of That Famous and Worthie Minister of Christ, in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. W. Perkins.* 3 vols. Cambridge, Iohn Legate. 1608-31.
PERNE, Andrew	*Gospell Courage or Christian Resolution for God, and his Truth.* In a Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons...31 of May,1643... London. 1643.
PETERS, Hugh	*Gods doings and Mans duty.* London. 1646.
---	*Mr. Peters Last Report of the English Wars...* London 1646.
PHILPOT, John	*Examinations and Letters of the Rev. John Philpot.* London, Religious Tract Society. (1830?)
PLAYFERE, Thomas	*Ten Sermons Preached By that eloquent Divine of famous memorie Th. Playfere Doctor in Divinitie...* Cambridge. 1610.
POLANUS, Amandus	*Snytagma Theologiae Christianae.* (?) 1609.
PONET, John	*A Short Treatise of politike povver*, and of the true obedience which Subjects owe to Kings and other civill Governours...Printed in the year 1556 and now reprinted in 1642. (London)

PRESTON, John	The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love. A treatise, Wherein the ground and exercise of Faith and Love, as they are set upon Christ their Object, and as they are expressed in Good Workes, is explained... The fifth Edition... London. 1634.
---	Foure Godly and Learned Treatises. Fourth Edition London. 1636.
---	The Golden Scepter held forth to the Humble...with the Churches Dignitie by her Marriage, and the Churches Dutie in her Carriage... London. 1638.
---	Life Eternall or, A Treatise Of the knowledge of the Divine Essence and Attributes... The Third Edition London. 1632.
---	The Nevv Covenant, or The Saints Portion. A Treatise Vnfolding the All-sufficiencie of God, Mans vprightnes, and the Covenant of grace...The fifth Edition, corrected. London. 1630.
---	The Saints Daily Exercise... Ninth Edition. London. 1635.
---	The Saints Qualification: Or A Treatise I. Of Humiliation, in Tenne Sermons. II. Of Sanctification, in nine Sermons: Whereunto is added A Treatise of Communion with Christ in the Sacrament...The second Edition, Corrected. London. 1634.
---	Sermons Preached Before His Maiestie...Fourth Impression. London 1634.
PRYNNE, William	Lord Bishops None of the Lords Bishops. London. 1640.
---	A Soveraigne Antidote To Prevent, Appease, and Determine our Unnatural and Destructive Civill Wars and Dissensions. London. 1642.
---	The Sword of Christian Magistracy Supported... London. 1647.
PYM, William	Master Pimmes Speech To the Lords in Parliament. Sitting in Westminster Hall the twelfth of Aprill, 1641. London. 1641.
RATHBAND, W.	A Most Grave and Modest Confutation of the Errors of the Sect, commonly called Brownists or Separatists. London. 1644.
ROBINSON, John	An Appendix to Mr. Perkins his Six Principles of Christian Religion. (London?) 1641.
---	A Ivst and Necessarie Apologie of Certain Christians no lesse contumeleously then commonly called Brownists or Barrowists. (?) 1625.
---	The Works of John Robinson. 2 vols. London, 1851.
(ROBINSON, J.)	The Peoples Plea. Fully Vindicating the Povver and Proceedings of the Parliament Occasioned by a defense of the Covenant. London, 1646.
RIDLEY, Nicholas	Treatises and Letters of Dr. Nicholas Ridley London, Religious Tract Society (1830?)
ROGERS, Ezekiel	The Chief Grounds of Christian Religion set down by way of catechising.. London. 1642. (re-printed in Mitchell, A.F., Catechisms of the Second Reformation London, 1886)

ROGERS, Richard	The Practice of Christianitie.. London. 1619.
RUDYARD, B.	A Most Worthy Speech spoken in the Honourable House of Commons...Desiring a happy union betweene the King and his Parliament without effusion of bloud, this present July 9th, 1642. London. 1642.
SALTMARSH, John	A Peace But no Pacification. London. 1643.
---	A Solemn Discourse Vpon the Sacred League and Covenant of both Kingdomes. London. 1644.
SCUDDER, Henry	The Christians Daily Walke in holy Securitie and Peace...The eighth Edition... London. 1642.
SEDGWICK, Obadiah	Haman's Vanity, Or, A Sermon Displaying the birthlesse Issues of Church destroying Adversaries... London. 1643.
SHUTE, N.	Corona Charitas. The Crown of Charitie.. London. 1626.
SIBBES, Richard	The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D.D. Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge; Preacher of Gray's Inn, London. 7 vols. Grosart, A.B., ed., Edinburgh, James Nichol. 1862.
SMITH, Henry	Works. 2 vols. Edinburgh, James Nichol. 1866.
SMYTH, John	The Works of John Smyth, Fellow of Christs College, 1594-8... 2 vols. Cambridge, 1915.
SPURSTOWE, William	Englands Patterne and Duty in the Monthly Fasts... London. 1643.
STOUGHTON, William	An Assertion For True and Christian Church-Policie.. (London?) 1604.
SYMMONS, Edward	A Loyall Subjects Beliefe. London. 1643.
SYMONDS, Joseph	A Sermon Lately Preached at Westminster... London. 1641.
TAYLOR, Thomas	The Works of That Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ Dr. Thom. Taylor... London. 1653.
THINS, Gregory	The Protestant Informer, Or Information to all Protestants... London. 1643.
(TRAVERS, Walter)	A Defence of the Ecclesiastical Discipline ordayned of God to be vsed in his Church... (?) 1588.
UDALL, John	A Demonstration of...Discipline... (1588) Arber, Edward, ed., London. 1880.
URSINUS, Zacharias	The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism. Williard, G.W., trans. 2nd. American edition. Columbus, Scott & Bascom. 1852.
USSHER, James	A Body of Divinity, or The Sum and Substance of Christian Religion. London. 1702.
---	The Whole Works of the Most Rev. James Ussher. 17 vols. Dublin, Hodges, Smith & Co. 1864.
WHATELY, William	A bride-bvsh, or A wedding sermon. London. 1617.
---	A Care Cloth: Or A Treatise of the Cumbers and Troubles of Marriage. London. 1624.
---	Charitable Teares, or A Sermon Shewing How Needfvll a thing it is for every godly man to lament the common sinnes of our Countrie... London. 1623.

--- *Gods Hvsbandry*: The First Part Tending to show the difference betwixt the Hypocrite and the true-hearted Christian. London. 1619.

--- *Mortification*. A Sermon Preached vpon the Third to the Colossians, The fifth Verse... London. 1623.

--- *The Nevv Birth*: or A Treatise of Regeneration. London. 1619.

(WHITE, John) *The Covenant*, with A Narrative of The Proceedings and Solemn Manner of Taking it by the Honourable House of Commons, and Reverent Assembly of Divines the 25th day of September, at Saint Margarits in Westminster... London. 1643.

WHITFIELD, Henry *Some Helpes to Stirre up to Christian Dvties*... The second edition.. London. 1634.

WHITGIFT, John *The Works of John Whitgift*. 3 vols. Edited for Parker Society by Rev. John Ayre. Cambridge, University Press. 1851-53.

WING, John *The Crowne Conivgall*, or The Spovse Royall. Middelburgh. 1620.

WOLLEBIUS, John *The Abridgment of Christian Divinitie*... Ross, Alexander, *trans*. London. 1660.

WRAY, John *Eight Occasional Speeches*. (?) 1641.

ZWINGLI, Huldreich *Selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531)* The Reformer of German Switzerland. Jackson, Samuel, M., *ed*. Philadelphia, 1901.

Anonymous *An Answer to Mis-led Doctor Ferne*. London. 1642.

--- *The Aphorisms of the Kingdom*. October 6, 1642. 1642.

--- *The Cities Proposition and the Parliaments Answer*. London. 1642.

--- *The City Remonstrance Remonstrated*. By. I.P. London. 1646.

--- *A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants*. A Translation of The *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* by Junius Brutus. (1689 edition) With an historical introduction by Harold J. Laski. New York, Harcourt Brace & Co. 1923.

--- *The Diurnall Occvrrences* of every dayes proceeding in Parliament since the beginning thereof, being Tuesday the twentieth of Ianuary, which ended the tenth of March, Anno. Dom. 1628. London. 1641.

--- *Englands Satisfaction in Eight Queries*. Concerning the true place, Office and power of a King, according to Gods Word. June 8, 1643.

--- *An Humble Remonstrance to His Maiesty*, Against the Tax of Ship-Money imposed, laying open the illegalitie, abuse, and inconvenience thereof. 1641.

--- *A Moderate Reply to the Cities Remonstrance*. London. 1646.

--- An Offer to Ovr Late Soueraigne King Iames, of a Digest to be made of the Lawes of England. London. 1629.

--- An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament For the Present setling Of the Presbyteriall Government. June 6, 1646. London. 1646.

--- A Paradox That Designe upon Religion was not the cause of State Misgovernment; but an effect of it. London. 1644.

--- A Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom. London. 1642.

--- Sacro-sancta Regum Majestas, or The Sacred and Royall Prerogative of Christian Kings. Oxford. 1644.

--- Scripture and Reason Pleaded for Defensive Armes. London. 1643.

--- The second part of the Un-Deceiver... London. 1643.

--- Some Queries Propounded to the Common-Councill and Citizens of London, concerning the Armies Demand of having the Militia of London of the 4th of May changed. London. 1647.

--- A Treatise in Justification of the King. Oxford. 1642.

--- A True Alarvm to England...written by a faithful Friend (a mourner in Sion). London. 1647.

--- The Vn-Deceiver. London. 1643.

--- The Unlavvfulnesse of the New Covenant, Briefly manifested in a letter from H.F. at Oxford, To his worthy Friend T.A. at Cambridge. Oxford. 1643.

--- A Vindication of the London Remonstrance. London. 1646.

Secondary Sources

ALLEN, J.W. *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*. London, Methuen & Co. 1928.

--- *English Political Thought 1603-1660*. London, Methuen & Co. 1938.

Alumni Cantabrigienses. 4 vols. Cambridge, The University Press. 1922.

Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714. 4 vols. Oxford, Parker & Co. 1891-2.

ATGER, Frederic *Essai sur l'Histoire des Doctrines du contrat social*. Nimes. 1906.

BELL, K.N. (comp.) *Puritanism and Liberty 1603-1660*. London, G. Bell & Sons. 1912.

BIRT, H.N. *The Elizabethan Religious Settlement*. London, G. Bell & Sons. 1907.

BORGEAUD, Charles *Annals of the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques* (essay on political ideas of Puritans) Paris.1890.

--- *The Rise of Modern Democracy in Old and New England*. Hill, Mrs. Birkbeck, *trans*. New York, C. Scribner's Sons. 1894.

BLACK, J.B. *The Reign of Elizabeth 1558-1603*. (The Oxford History of England). Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1936.

BRANDT, Geeraert *The History of the Reformation and other Ecclesiastical Transactions In and about the Low-countries.. down to the Synod of Dort*. Chamberlayne, John, *trans*. 4 vols. London, T. Wood. 1720-1723.

BRONKEMA, Ralph *The Essence of Puritanism*. Goes (Holland), Oosterbaum & LeCointre. 1929.

BROWN, John *Puritan Preaching in England*. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. 1900.

BROWN, William A. "Covenant Theology" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Hastings, James, *ed*. New York, C. Scribner's Sons. 1910.

BURRAGE, Champlain "Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century," *American Society of Church History*, III. pp.143-164.

--- *The Church Covenant Idea: its Origin and Development*. Philadelphia, American Baptist Publishing Society 1904.

--- *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641)* 2 vols. Cambridge, University Press. 1912.

--- *John Penry, the so-called Martyr of Congregationalism*. Oxford, University Press. 1913.

--- *New Facts Concerning John Robinson*. Oxford, University Press. 1910.

--- *The True Story of Robert Browne*. Oxford, University Press. 1906.

BURGESS, Walter H. *John Smith, the Se-Baptist, Thomas Helwys and the First Baptist Church in England*. London, J. Clarke & Co. 1911.

BURTON, J.H. *The History of Scotland*. Edinburgh & London, W. Blackwood & Sons. 1873.

BYINGTON, E.H. *The Puritan in England and New England.* Boston, Roberts Bros. 1896.

CAMPBELL, Douglas *The Puritan in Holland, England and America* New York, Harper & Bros. 1893.

CHAPIN, A.B. *Puritanism not genuine Protestantism.* Being a review of "The Puritans and Their Pamphlets" by Edwin Hall. New York, Stanford & Swords. 1847.

CHILD, Gilbert W. *Church and State under the Tudors.* London & New York, Longmans Green & Co. 1890.

CLAPP, Clifford B. "Motto of Harvard College: Christo et Ecclesiae" *The Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts.* XXV. pp.59-83. 1922.

CLARK, George N. *The Seventeenth Century.* Oxford, The Clarendon Press. 1929.

COOPER, Charles H. & COOPER, Thompson *Athena Cantabrigienses.* Vols. II & III. 1586-1611. Cambridge, D. Bell & Co. 1861.

CREIGHTON, Mandall *Historical Lectures and Addresses.* London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1904.

CUNNINGHAM, Wm. *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation.* Edinburgh, Clark. 1866.

DAVIDSON, A.B. "Covenant" in *A Dictionary of the Bible.* Hastings, James, *ed.* Vol. I. New York, C. Scribner's Sons. 1893.

DAVIES, Godfrey "Arminian vs. Puritan ca. 1620-1640." *Huntington Library Bulletin* #5. April 1934 pp.157-179.

--- *The Early Stuarts 1603-1660.* (Oxford History of England). Oxford, The Clarendon Press. 1937.

--- "English Political Sermons 1603-1640." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, v.III: pp.1-23. 1939-1940.

DEXTER, H.M. *The Church Polity of the Pilgrims, the polity of the New Testament.* Boston, Congregational Publishing Society. 1870.

--- *The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years as Seen in its Literature.* New York, Harper & Bros. 1880.

--- *The England and Holland of the Pilgrims.* Boston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1905.

--- *English Exiles in Amsterdam 1597-1625.* A paper contributed to the Massachusetts Historical Society. Cambridge (Mass.) 1890.

--- *The True Story of John Smyth, the se-Baptist.* Boston, Lee & Shepard. 1881.

Dictionnaire De La Bible. (Article on "Alliance") Paris, Letouzey et Ané. 1895.

Dictionary of National Biography, The 61 vols. New York, Macmillan Company. 1885-1890.

DORNER, I.A. *History of Protestant Theology, particularly in Germany..* Robson, George & Taylor, Sophia, *trans.* 2 vols. Edinburgh, T & T Clark. 1871.

DUMOULIN, Pierre *The History of the English and Scotch Presbytery.* London. 1659.

Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Hastings, James, ed. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. 1908-1922.

EVANS, B. *Early English Baptists.* 2 vols. London. 1862-64 (v. 7,8 of the Bunyan Library)

FENN, William W. "The Marrow of Calvin's Theology," *Harvard Theological Review.* II: pp.323-340. 1909.

FENTON, J.F. *The Theery of the Social Compact and Its Influence upon the American Revolution.* (no. pub. given) 1891.

FISHER, G.P. *Discussions in History and Theology.* New York, C. Scribner's Sons. 1880.

FLEMING, D.H. *Story of the Scottish Covenants in outline.* Edinburgh, Oliphant. 1904.

FLYNN, John S. *Influence of Puritanism on Political and Religious Thought of the English.* New York, E. Dutton & Co. 1920.

FOSTER, Herbert D. "International Calvinism Through Locke and the Revolution of 1688." *Collected Papers of Herbert D. Foster.* Privately Printed. 1929.

FRERE, W.H. *The English Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I. 1558-1625.* London, MacMillan & Co. 1904.

--- & DOUGLAS, C.E. (eds.) *Puritan Manifestoes. A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt.* London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. 1907.

GAGNEBIN, Henri *Études historiques sur la réformation au seizième siècle en Allegmagne, en Swisse, et en France.* 2 ed. Lausanne, Editions La Concorde. 1936.

GARDINER, S.R. *The First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution 1603-1660.* London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1887 (7th edition).

--- *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil Wars. 1603-1642.* 10 vols. London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1883-4.

--- (ed.) *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution. 1628-1660.* Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1889.

GEE, Henry *The Elizabethan Clergy and the Settlement of Religion 1558-1564.* Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1898.

GOOCH, G.P. *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century.* With supplementary notes and appendices by H.J. Laski. Cambridge, The University Press. 1927.

GREGORY, J. *Puritanism in the Old World and In the New...* New York, Fleming Revell. 1890.

HALL, Edwin *The Puritans and Their Principles.* New York, Baker & Scribner. 1846.

HALLER, William *The Rise of Puritanism*; or, The Way to the New Jerusalem as set forth in pulpit and press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton, 1570-1643. New York, Columbia University Press.1938.

--- (ed.) *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution. 1638-1647.* 3 vols. New York, Columbia University Press. 1934.

HANBURY, Benjamin	Historical Memorials Relating to the Independents or Congregationalists. 3 vols. London, Congregational Union 1839-44.
HARRISON, A.W.	Arminianism. London, Duckworth. 1937.
HASTIE, William	The Theology of the Reformed Church in its Fundamental Principles. Edinburgh, T & T Clark. 1904.
HAWES, A.J.G.	"Arminius and His Teaching," Church Quarterly Review. XCVII:193. pp.132-146. 1923.
HEARNSHAW, F.J.C. (ed.)	The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Renaissance and the Reformation. London, G.G. Harrap & Co. 1925.
HEPPE, H.L.J.	Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der reformirten Kirche. Leiden, E.J. Brill. 1879.
---	Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus. Gotha, F. A. Perthes. 1857.
HETHERINGTON, W.M.	History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. New York, Mark H. Newman. 1843.
HO, Yung-chi	The Origin of Parliamentary Sovereignty or "mixed" Monarchy. Shanghai. 1935.
HUNT, John	Religious Thought in England. vol. I. London, Strahan & Co. 1870.
KERN, Fritz	Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages. Chrimes, S.B., trans. Oxford, B. Blackwell. 1939.
KIRBY, E.W.	"Lay Feoffes: A study in Militant Puritanism," Journal of Modern History, XIV: pp.1-25. March, 1942.
---	William Prynne, A study in Puritanism. Cambridge, (Mass.), Harvard University Press. 1931.
KITTREDGE, George	"Note on Dr. William Ames," The Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. XIII:pp.60-99. 1910-11.
KNAPPEN, M.M.	Tudor Puritanism. A Chapter in the History of Idealism. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. 1939.
--- (ed.)	The Elizabethan Puritan Diaries by Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward. Chicago, American Society of Church History. 1933.
LASKI, Harold J.	The Rise of European Liberalism. London, G. Allen & Unwin. 1936.
LEWIS, John	A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of Anabaptism in England. London, Printed for J. Roberts. 1738.
LINDSAY, A.D.	The Essentials of Democracy. London, Oxford University Press. 1929.
LINDSAY, T.M.	"The Covenant Theology," in The British & Foreign Evangelical Review. XXVIII: pp.521-538. July 1879.
LUMSDEN, John	The Covenants of Scotland. Paisley, A. Gardner. 1914.
MACGREGOR, Janet G.	The Scottish Presbyterian Polity: a study of its origins in the Sixteenth Century. Edinburgh, & London, Oliver & Boyd. 1926.

MACKENNAL, Alexander The Story of the English Separatists. London, Congregational Union of England & Wales. 1893.

MAINE, Henry S. Ancient Law, its connection with the early history of society and its relation to modern ideas. (3rd Amer. ed. from 5th London ed.) New York, Henry Holt. 1877.

MARSDEN, J.B. The History of the Early Puritans. From the Reformation to the Opening of the Civil War in 1642. London, Hamilton, Adams & Co. 1850.

MILLER, Perry "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. XXXII: pp.247-300. 1936.

--- The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century. New York, Macmillan Co. 1939.

--- Orthodoxy in Massachusetts. 1630-1650. A Genetic Study. Cambridge, (Mass.) Harvard University Press. 1933.

MITCHELL, A.F. Catechisms of the Second Reformation. London, James Nisbet & Co. 1886.

--- The Westminster Assembly; its history and standards. London, J. Nisbet & Co. 1883.

MONTAGUE, F.C. The History of England. Vol. VII. From the Ascension of James I to the Restoration. 1605-1660. London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1907.

MORISON, Samuel E. Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century. Cambridge (Mass.) Harvard University Press. 1936.

---. The Puritan Pronaos. Studies in the Intellectual Life of New England in the Seventeenth Century. London, Oxford University Press. 1936.

MULLINGER, James B. Cambridge Characteristics in the Seventeenth Century. London & Cambridge, MacMillan & Co. 1867.

--- A History of the University of Cambridge. London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1888.

MURRAY, R.H. The Political Consequences of the Reformation: Studies in Sixteenth Century Political Thought. Boston, Little Brown & Co. 1926.

NEAL, Daniel The History of the Puritans, or Protestant Nonconformists. 4 vols. London. 1732-38.

NOBBS, D. Theocracy and Toleration. A Study of the Disputes in Dutch Calvinism from 1600 to 1650. Cambridge, The University Press. 1938.

OMAN, Charles The Sixteenth Century. New York, Dutton & Co. 1937.

OSGOOD, Herbert L. "The Political Ideas of the Puritans," Political Science Quarterly. VI:1 & 2. pp.1-28;201-231. 1891.

PARKER, Henry A. "The Feoffees of Importations," Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. XI. pp.263-277. Boston. 1910.

PEARSON, A.F.S. *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism.* 1535-1603. Cambridge, The University Press. 1925.

--- *Church and State: Political Aspects of Sixteenth Century Puritanism.* Cambridge, The University Press. 1920.

PEEL, Albert *The Brownists in Norwich and Norfolk about 1580.* Cambridge, The University Press. 1920.

--- *The First Congregational Churches; new light on separatist congregations in London 1567-1581.* Cambridge, The University Press. 1920.

--- (ed.) *The Seconde Parte of a Register.* 2 vols. Cambridge, The University Press. 1915.

PEILE, John *Christ's College.* University of Cambridge College Histories. London, F.E. Robinson & Co. 1900.

PIERCE, William *An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts.* London, A. Constable & Co. 1908.

POLLARD, A.F. *The History of England From the Accession of Edward VI to the Death of Elizabeth.* vol. VI. 1547-1603. London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1910.

POWICKE, Frederick J. *Henry Barrow, Separatist, (1550?-1593) and the Exiled Church of Amsterdam (1593-1622).* London, J. Clarke & Co. 1900.

PROTHERO, G.W. (ed.) *Select Statues and Other Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I.* Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1894.

PROVAND, W.S. *Puritanism in the Scottish Church.* Paisley, A. Gardner. 1923.

RACKHAM, H. *Christ's College in Former Days.* Cambridge, The University Press. 1939.

Realencyklodädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche. Leipzig. 1896.

RITCHIE, David G. "Contributions to the History of the Social Contract Theory," *Political Science Quarterly.* VI:4 Dec.1891.

SCHAFF, Philip *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Ideas.* 3 vols. New York, Harper & Bros. 1878.

SCHEFFER, J.DeHoop *History of the Free Churchmen Called the Brownists, Pilgrim Fathers, and Baptists in the Dutch Republic. 1581-1701.* Ithaca, Andrus & Church. 1921.

SCHNEIDER, H.W. *The Puritan Mind.* New York, Henry Holt & Co. 1930.

SCOTT, Thomas (ed.) *The Articles of the Synod of Dort, and the Rejection of Errors.* London, A. Macintosh. 1818.

SELBIE, W.B. "The Influence of the Old Testament on Puritanism," in Bevan, E.R. & Singer, Charles, (eds.), *The Legacy of Israel.* Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1927.

Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, The New. Jackson, S.M. (ed.) New York & London, Funk & Wagnalls. 1908-1912.

SHAW, W.A. *A History of the English Church During the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth. 1640-1660.* London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1900.

--- "English Presbyterianism," *English Historical Review*, October 1888.

SHUCKBURGH, E.S. *Emmanuel College.* University of Cambridge College Histories. London, F.E.Robinson. 1904.

SMITHEN, F.J. *Continental Protestantism and the English Reformation.* London, J. Clarke & Co. 1927.

STEARNS, R.P. *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands; The Rise and Fall of the English Congregational Classis. 1621-1635.* Chicago, The American Society of Church History. 1940.

STRYPE, John *Annals of the Reformation.* A new edition. 7 vols. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1824.

TATHAM, G.B. *The Puritans in Power.* Cambridge, The University Press. 1913.

TURNER, G.L. (*ed.*) *Original Records of Early Nonconformity.* London, T.F.Unwin. 1911.

UNDERHILL, E.B. *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Church of England in the Seventeenth Century.* London, Haddon Brothers & Co. 1854.

--- (*ed.*) *Tracts on Liberty of Conscience and Persecution 1614-1661.* London, Hanserd Knollys Society 1846.

USHER, R.G. (*ed.*) *The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth as illustrated by the Minute Book of the Dedham Classis.* London, Royal Historical Society. 1905.

VAUGHAN, Robert *English Nonconformity.* London, Jackson, Walford & Hodder. 1862.

WAKEMAN, H.O. *The Church and the Puritans. 1570-1660.* London & New York, Longmans, Green & Co. 3rd ed. 1892.

WALKER, Williston *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism.* New York, C. Scribner's Sons. 1893.

WRIGHT, Louis B. "William Perkins, Elizabethan Apostle of Practical Divinity," *Huntington Library Quarterly.* 1939-40. III. pp.171-196.

Addenda

MATHER, Cotton *Magnalia Christi americana* London, T. Parkhurst. 1702.